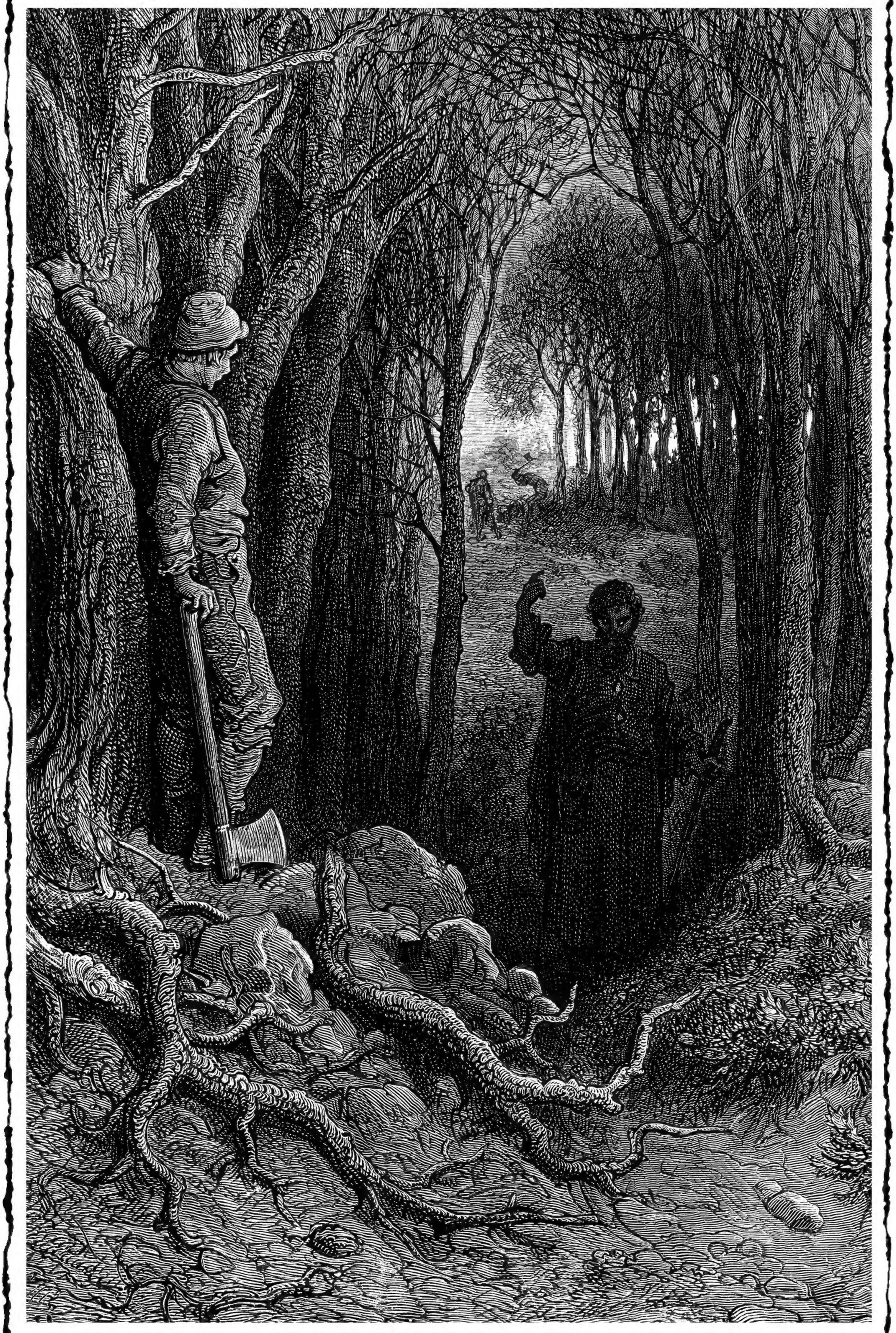
THE DARK HORSE BOOK OF HORROR

Mike Mignola
Gary Gianni
Jill Thompson
Evan Dorkin
Sean Phillips
P. Craig Russell
Paul Chadwick
Kurt Busiek
and others

The Dark Horse Book of

Horror



From Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, illustrated by Gustave Doré

The Dark Horse Book of Horror

Strange Mysteries of the Lost and Risen Dead and the Fiends Who Lay Them Down, Told in Words and Pictures

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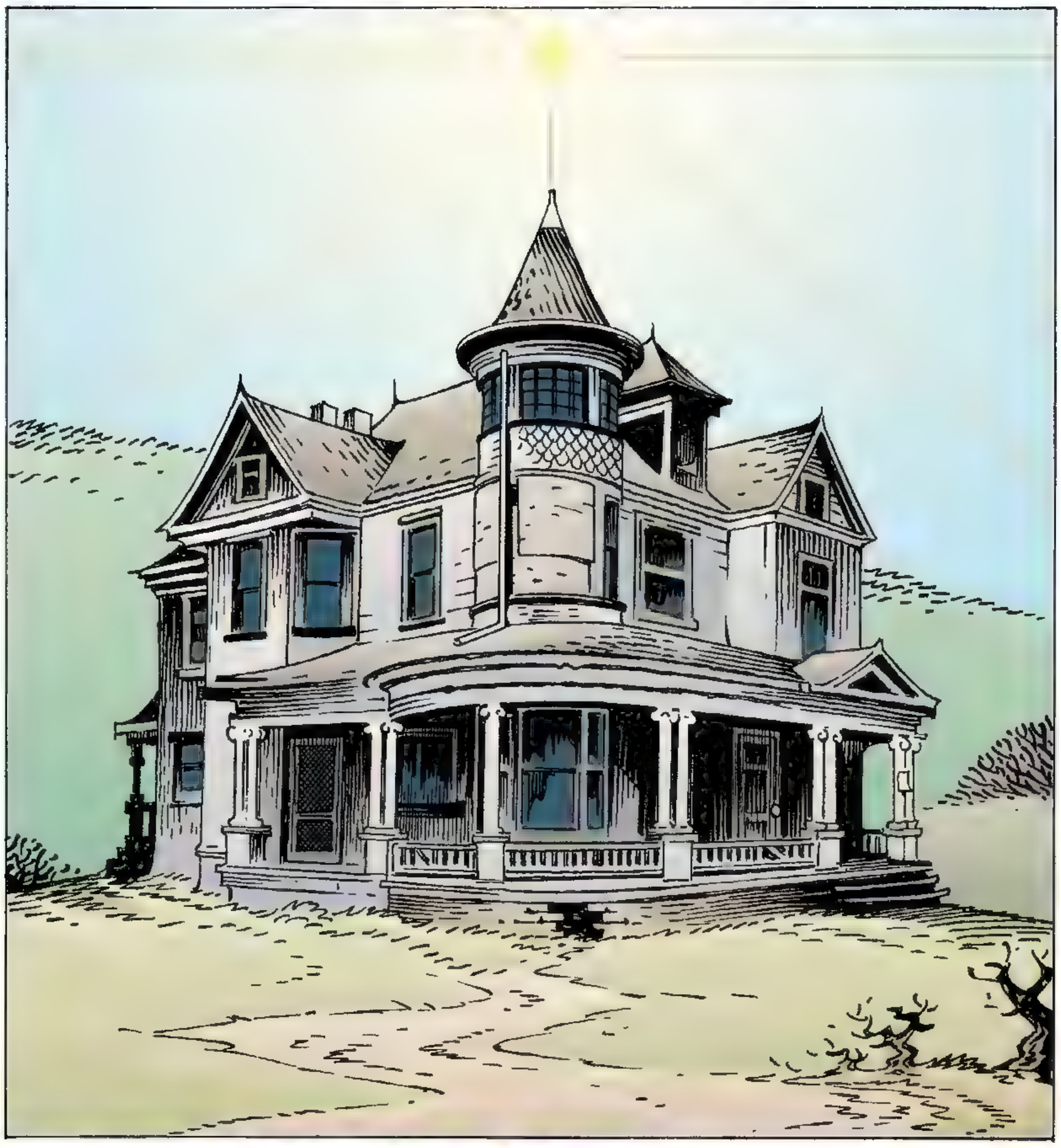
The Dark Horse Book of

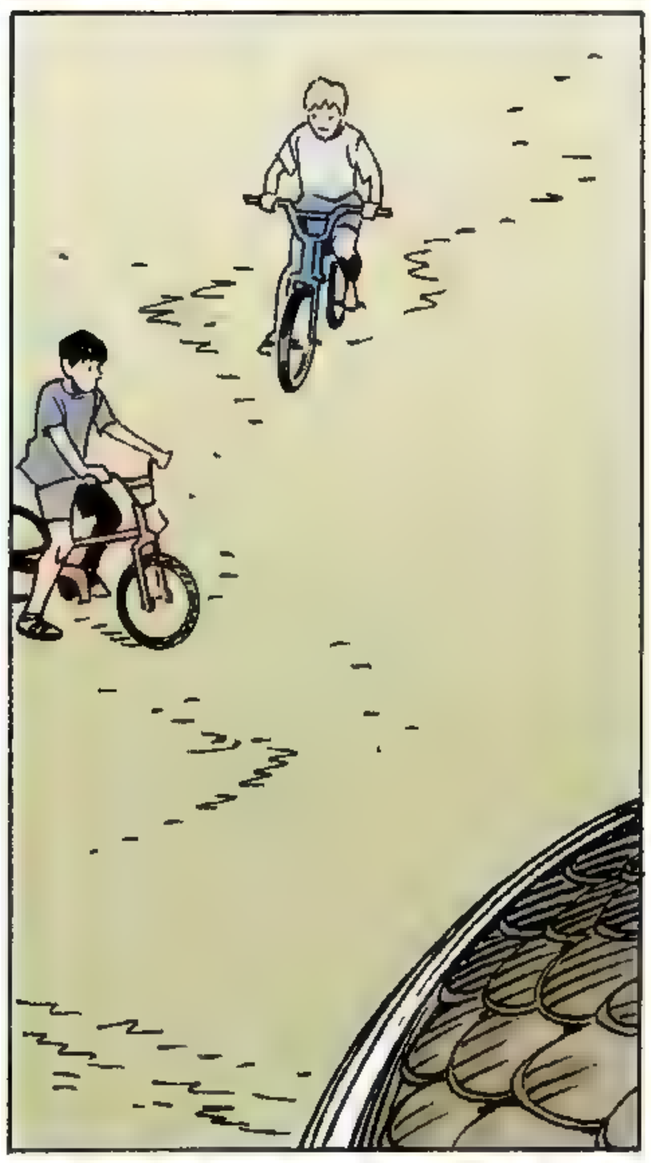
HAUNTINGS

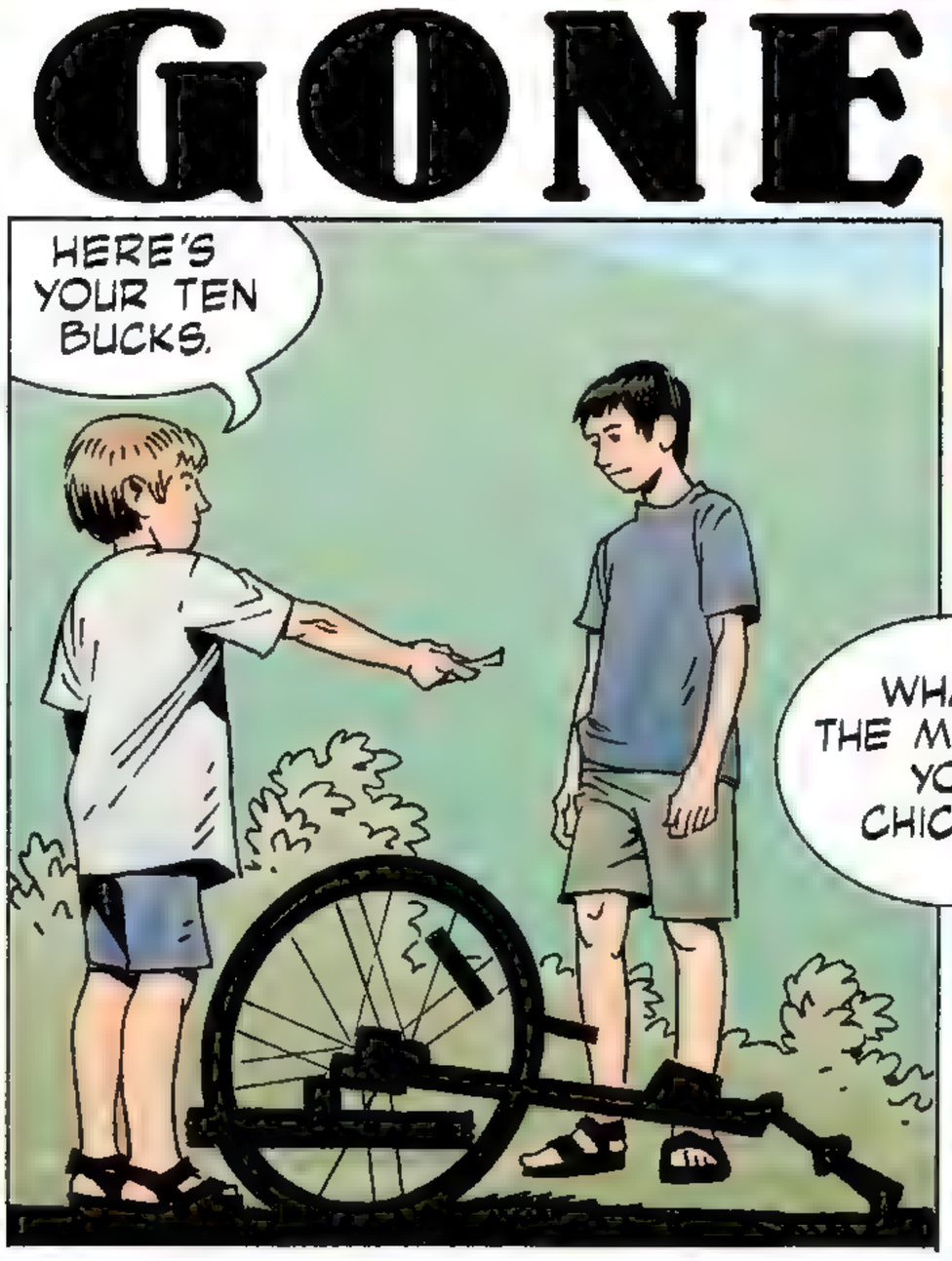
The Dark Horse Book of Hauntings

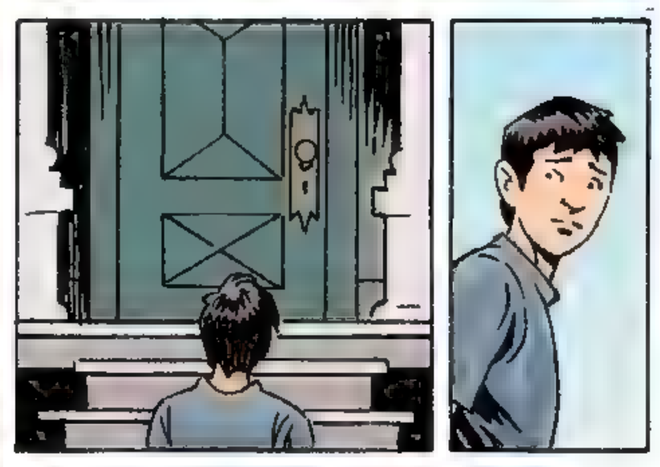
Seven uncanny tales of Spirit Manifestations, Apparitions, and otherworldly Horrors— told in Words and Pictures.

GONE









P.C.R. OP. 55 — 2003

BY P. CRAIG RUSSELL & MIKE RICHARDSON

LOCKED!

CRINNCH

I CAN'T SEE ANY-THING.

C'MON, YA COWARD. YOU GOT THE MONEY. GO.

GEEZ, MIKE, WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR?

YOUR MONEY, DUDE. YOU WANT IT, YOU GO IN AND GET IT.

I ...

...I DON'T SEE IT.

BULUCCCK! BUCK, BUCK, BUCK! NOW WHO'S CHICKEN, HUH?

HA!

COME ON, JAKE, KNOCK IT OFF. YOU BEEN IN THERE LONG ENOUGH. QUIT SCREWIN' AROUND!

JAKE! DON'T BE AN ASSHOLE!

FINE! STAY IN THERE AND ROT FOR ALL I CARE!

CONDEMNED - NO TRESPASSING!

...SO YOU JUST LEFT HIM THERE AND WENT ON ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, IS THAT IT? HE COULD BE *HURT.*

GEEZ, MOM, HE'S ALWAYS PULLING SHIT LIKE THAT...

LANGUAGE.

OW!

I'M SORRY, JANET.

HE'S RIGHT. JAKE THINKS THINGS LIKE THIS ARE FUNNY. WE'LL SEE HOW FUNNY HE THINKS IT IS WHEN HE'S GROUNDED!

WITH NO INTER-NET ...

...FOR SIX WEEKS!

JAKE! WHERE ARE YOU?

JAKE!

WHY DID YOU WAIT SO LONG TO SAY ANY-THING? HE COULD BE TRAPPED IN THERE.

TRAPPED!

I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST SCREW... UH, FOOLING AROUND. I THOUGHT MAYBE HE WENT HOME.

JAKE! IF YOU ARE IN THERE YOU HAD BETTER GET YOUR BUTT OUT HERE, RIGHT NOW, MISTER!

JAKE?

HE WENT IN THERE?

YEAH.

JAKE!

JAKE! ANSWER ME RIGHT NOW!

JACKSON LEE CURRY, DAMMIT, YOU **ANSWER** ME!

JANET? MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T GO IN THERE?

JAKE!

JAKE!

JANET?

NO! MOM! DON'T!

BEEP

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS, MRS. LEMOND?

YES, I'M SURE.

MIKE SAW JAKE GO IN AND NOT COME OUT.

AND WE BOTH SAW JANET GO IN...

...AND NOT COME OUT.

HMMM...

WHAT WERE YOU BOYS DOING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN?

NOTHIN.

"NOTHIN"!

THOUGHT IF YOU CAME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE YOU COULD BUST INTO A HOUSE WITHOUT GETTING *CAUGHT?!*

SO WHY DID YOU LET YOUR FRIEND GO IN THERE ALONE?

MIKE, HE ASKED YOU A QUESTION.

GAVE HIM TEN DOLLARS.

TEN DOLLARS...

YOU *PAID* HIM TO GO IN?

SORT OF. I THREW IT IN AND HE WENT IN AFTER IT.

WE WERE JUST PLAYING CHICKEN.
IT WAS A BET.
I'M SORRY!
I THOUGHT HE'D COME BACK OUT.
HMM.
ARE YOU SURE YOUR FRIENDS AREN'T HAVING US ALL ON, SON?
JAKE MIGHT THINK THIS IS FUNNY, BUT JANET WOULDN'T CARRY A JOKE THIS FAR.
SOMETHING'S JUST NOT RIGHT HERE.
THE HECK WITH THIS, I'M GOING IN!
?!
HEY! HEY! MRS. LEMOND!
MOM! NO!
HOLD ON A MINUTE!
JUST ...
LET *ME* HANDLE THIS.

HELLO! ANYBODY THERE?

MRS. CURRY? JAKE?

MOM! NO! DON'T!

LOOK, BUSTER! YOU STARTED THIS. YOU SET THIS WHOLE THING IN MOTION, SO STOP YOUR WHINING AND WAIT RIGHT THERE.

MOM ...

NO ...

PLEASE.

LOCKED.

TRAPPED.

CAUGHT.

END

Dr. Carp's Experiment

LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK. 1991.

DOCTOR CARP. BORN 1836. DIED...? NOBODY KNOWS.

REAL DOCTOR?

HE *WAS*...

THERE WERE RUMORS, AND A POLICE INVESTIGATION. TURNS OUT HE WAS A GRAND MASTER IN THE *GOLDEN LODGE*, THE *HELIOPIC BROTHERHOOD OF RA.**

OH, *THOSE* GUYS...

SO HE WAS CRAZY.

*BELIEVED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE (1906) AND THE TUNGUSKA FOREST EXPLOSION (1908).

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

HE DISAPPEARED IN 1902, THEN HIS SISTER MOVED IN AND LIVED HERE, TILL SHE DIED IN 1911. THE HOUSE HAS BEEN PRETTY MUCH EMPTY SINCE THEN.

HOW HAUNTED IS IT?

NOT TOO BAD.

"THE USUAL STUFF..."

THE BUREAU'S* SENT THEIR PSYCHICS THROUGH HERE HALF A DOZEN TIMES OVER THE YEARS. AND YOU REMEMBER LESLIE CAMPBELL?

SHE'S GOOD.

SHE HELD A SITTING HERE A COUPLE YEARS AGO. EVERYBODY'S COME UP WITH PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING...

"THE LOCATION BEARS A PSYCHIC IMPRINT DUE TO A SINGLE ACT OF VIOLENCE OR SOME OTHER STRONG EMOTIONAL TRAUMA. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A SENTIENT MIND OR SPIRIT, AND NO--"

SHHH

WHAT? YOU HEAR SOME-THING?

YOU DON'T HEAR THAT?

IS IT LATIN? IN 1928 MISS E.F. RIDDELL REPORTED HEARING LATIN, AND IN 1931--

SHHH...

IT'S A VOICE.

*BUREAU FOR PARANORMAL RESEARCH AND DEFENSE

"THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE..."

CHALK ON A CHALK BOARD...

?

NO ONE EVER REPORTED THAT.

FLIP FLIP

SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS NEW BLUEPRINT?

NOT NEW. CARP HAD THE PLACE BUILT IN 1874. LAST WEEK THE ORIGINAL PLANS TURNED UP IN A BOX OF JUNK AT THE COUNTY RECORDS OFFICE.

BECAUSE OF THE HOUSE'S REPUTATION, THEY TURNED THEM OVER TO US.

THE PLANS SHOWED A BASEMENT ROOM AND OUR FILES DIDN'T, SO WE WENT DIGGING...

RD

AND THERE YOU GO. WE HAVEN'T OPENED IT. WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU.

REMEMBER THE SECRET ROOM AT CASTLE GLAMIS?

THAT'S WHY *YOU* GO FIRST.

EVERY DIRTY JOB...

PROBLEM?

NOT YET.

CREEEEEEE--

JEEZ, IT'S COLD AS HELL IN...

EEEEEEE

HELLBOY?

...

SON OF A--

JEHOIA
RMMANE

THUD

HELLBOY?

!

HOLY CRAP!

HOW LONG WAS I IN THERE?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? TWO SECONDS.

DID YOU TRIP OVER SOME-THING?

I GUESS SO...

HOLY CRAP!

IT LOOKS LIKE THESE GUYS CONJURED UP A DEMON...

YEAH.

...THEN THEY SHOT IT FULL OF HOLES.

THIS IS A GOOD ONE...

THIS IS ONE FOR THE BOOKS.

PRD

ONE OF THESE GUYS MUST BE THE DOCTOR. THE SISTER MUST HAVE FOUND THIS MESS AND HAD THE ROOM BRICKED UP JUST AS IT WAS. NO FUNERALS. NO NOTHIN'.

NO WONDER THE PLACE IS HAUNTED.

YUP.

HELLBOY?

YOU ALL RIGHT? WHAT IS THAT?

THE END

Thurnley Abbey

by PERCEVAL LANDON

ILLUSTRATIONS *by* GARY GIANNI

Three years ago I was on my way out to the East, and as an extra day in London was of some importance, I took the Friday evening mail-train to Brindisi instead of the usual Thursday morning Marseilles express. Many people shrink from the long, forty-eight-hour train journey through Europe, and the subsequent rush across the Mediterranean on the nineteen-knot *Isis* or *Osiris*; but there is really very little discomfort on either

the train or the mail-boat, and unless there is actually nothing for me to do, I always like to save the extra day and a half in London. This time—it was early in the shipping season, probably about the beginning of September—there were few passengers, and I had a compartment to myself in the P. & O. Indian Express all the way from Calais. The journey was just like any other. We slept after luncheon; we dawdled the afternoon away with yellow-backed novels; sometimes we exchanged platitudes in the smoking room, and it was there that I met Alastair Colvin.

Colvin was a man of middle height, with a resolute, well-cut jaw; his hair was turning grey; his moustache was sun whitened, but otherwise he was clean-shaven—obviously a gentleman, and obviously also a preoccupied man. He had no great wit. When spoken to, he made the usual remarks in the right way, and I dare say he refrained from banalities only because he spoke less than the rest of us.

Of course this did not seem to me to be of any importance. Most travelers by train become a trifle infirm of purpose after thirty-six hours' rattling. But Colvin's restless way I noticed in somewhat marked contrast with the man's personal importance and dignity, especially ill suited to his finely made large hand with strong, broad, regular nails and its few lines. As I looked at his hand I noticed a long, deep, and recent scar of ragged shape. However, it is absurd to pretend that I thought anything was unusual. I went off at five o'clock on Sunday afternoon to sleep away the hour or two that had still to be got through before we arrived at Brindisi.

Once there, we few passengers transhipped our hand baggage, verified our berths—there were only a score of us in all—and then, after an aimless ramble of half an hour in Brindisi, we returned to dinner at the Hotel International, not wholly surprised that the town had been the death of Virgil. After dinner I was looking with awe at a trellis overgrown with blue vines, when Colvin moved across the room to my table. He picked up *Il Secolo*, but almost immediately gave up the pretence of reading it. He turned squarely to me and said:

"Would you do me a favour?"

One doesn't do favours to stray acquaintances on Continental expresses without knowing something more of them than I knew of Colvin. But I smiled in a noncommittal way, and asked him what he wanted. I wasn't wrong in part of my estimate of him; he said bluntly:

"Will you let me sleep in your cabin on the *Osiris*?" And he coloured a little as he said it.

Now, there is nothing more tiresome than having to put up with a stable companion at sea, and I asked him rather pointedly:

"Surely there is room for all of us?" I thought that perhaps he had been partnered off with some mangy Levantine, and wanted to escape from him at all hazards.

Colvin, still somewhat confused, said, "Yes, I am in a cabin by myself. But you would do me the greatest favour if you would allow me to share yours."

This was all very well, but, besides the fact that I always sleep better when alone, there had been some recent thefts onboard English liners, and I hesitated, frank and honest and self-conscious as Colvin was. Just then the mail-train came in with a clatter and a rush of escaping steam, and I asked him to see me again about it on the boat when we started. He answered me curtly—I suppose he saw the mistrust in my manner—"I am a member of White's." I smiled to myself as he said it, but I remembered in a moment that the man—if he were really what he claimed to be, and I make no doubt that he was—must have been sorely put to it before he urged that fact as a guarantee of his respectability to a total stranger at a Brindisi hotel.

That evening, as we cleared the red and green harbor lights of Brindisi, Colvin explained. This is his story in his own words.

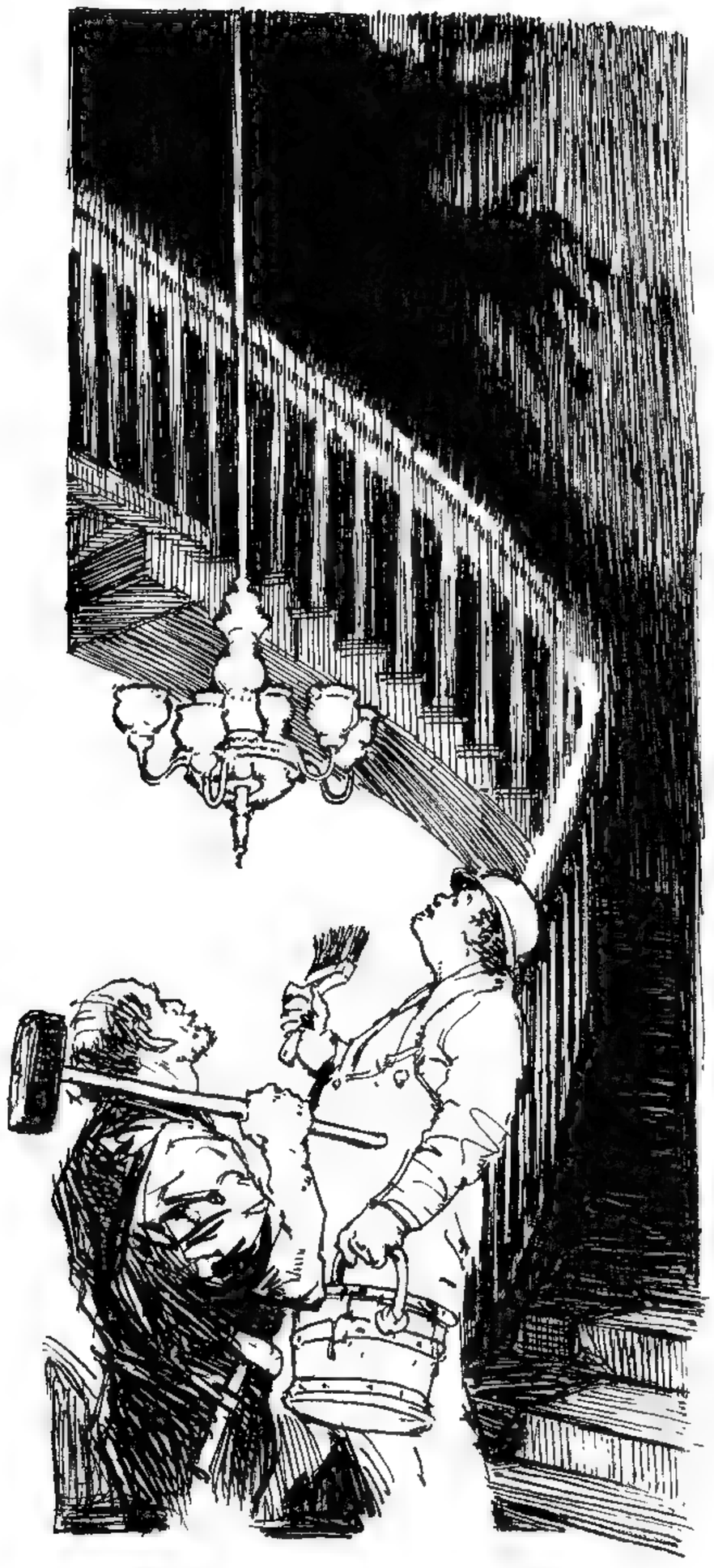
"When I was traveling in India some years ago, I made the acquaintance of a youngish man in the Woods and Forests. We camped out together for a week, and I found him a pleasant companion. John Broughton was a light-hearted soul when off duty, but a steady and capable man in any of the small emergencies that continually arise in that department. He was liked and trusted by the natives, and though a trifle over-pleased with himself when he escaped to civilization at Simla or Calcutta, Broughton's future was well assured in government service, when a fair-sized estate was unexpectedly

left to him, and he joyfully shook the dust of the Indian plains from his feet and returned to England. For five years he drifted about London. I saw him now and then. We dined together about every eighteen months, and I could trace pretty exactly the gradual sickening of Broughton with a merely idle life. At last he told me that he had decided to marry and settle down at his place, Thurnley Abbey, which had long been empty. He spoke about looking after the property and standing for his constituency in the usual way. Vivien Wilde, his fiancée, had, I suppose, begun to take him in hand.

"Among other things, I asked him about Thurnley Abbey. He confessed that he hardly knew the place. The last tenant, a man called Clarke, had lived in one wing for fifteen years and seen no one. He had been a miser and a hermit. It was the rarest thing for a light to be seen at the Abbey after dark. Only the barest necessities of life were ordered, and the tenant himself received them at the side door. His one half-caste manservant, after a month's stay in the house, had abruptly left without warning, and had returned to the Southern States. One thing Broughton complained bitterly about: Clarke had wilfully spread the rumor among the villagers that the Abbey was haunted, and had even condescended to play childish tricks with spirit-lamps and salt in order to scare trespassers away at night. He had been detected in the act of this tomfoolery, but the story spread, and no one, said Broughton, would venture near the house except in broad daylight. The hauntedness of Thurnley Abbey was now, he said with a grin, part of the gospel of the countryside, but he and his young wife were going to change all that. Would I propose myself any time I liked? I, of course, said I would, and equally, of course, intended to do nothing of the sort without a definite invitation.

"The house was put in thorough repair, though not a stick of the old furniture and tapestry was removed. Floors and ceilings were relaid; the roof was made watertight again, and the dust of half a century was scoured out. It was called an Abbey, though as a matter of fact it had been only the infirmary of the long-vanished Abbey of Clouster some five miles away. The larger part of the building remained as it had been in pre-Reformation days, but a wing had been added in Jacobean times, and that part of the house had been kept in something like repair by Mr. Clarke. He had, in both the ground and first floors, set heavy timber doors, strongly barred with iron, in the passage between the earlier and the Jacobean parts of the house, and had entirely neglected the former. So there had been a good deal of work to be done.

"Broughton, whom I saw in London two or three times about this period, made a deal of fun over the positive refusal of the workmen to remain after sundown. Even after electric light had been put into every room, nothing would induce them to remain, though, as Broughton observed, electric light was death on ghosts. The legend of the Abbey's ghosts had gone far and wide,



and the men would take no risks. They went home in batches of five and six, and even during the daylight hours there was an inordinate amount of talking between one another, if either happened to be out of sight of his companion. On the whole, though nothing of any sort had been conjured up even by their heated imaginations during their five months' work upon the Abbey, the belief in the ghosts was rather strengthened than otherwise because of the men's confessed nervousness, and local tradition declared itself in favor of the ghost of an immured nun.

"'Good old nun!' said Broughton.

"I asked him whether in general he believed in the possibility of ghosts, and, rather to my surprise, he said that he couldn't say he entirely disbelieved in them. A man in India had told him one morning in camp that he believed that his mother was dead in England, as her vision had come to his tent the night before. He had not been alarmed, but had said nothing, and the figure vanished again. As a matter of fact, the next possible *dak-walla* brought on a telegram announcing the mother's death. 'There the thing was,' said Broughton. But at Thurnley he was practical enough. He roundly cursed the idiotic selfishness of Clarke, whose silly antics had caused all the inconvenience. At the same time, he couldn't refuse to sympathize to some extent with the ignorant workmen. 'My own idea,' said he, 'is that if a ghost ever does come in one's way, one ought to speak to it.'

"I agreed. Little as I knew of the ghost world and its conventions, I had always remembered that a spook was honor bound to wait to be spoken to. It didn't seem much to do, and I felt that the sound of one's own voice would at any rate reassure oneself as to one's wakefulness. But there are few ghosts outside Europe—few, that is, that a white man can see—and I had never been troubled with any. However, as I have said, I told Broughton that I agreed.

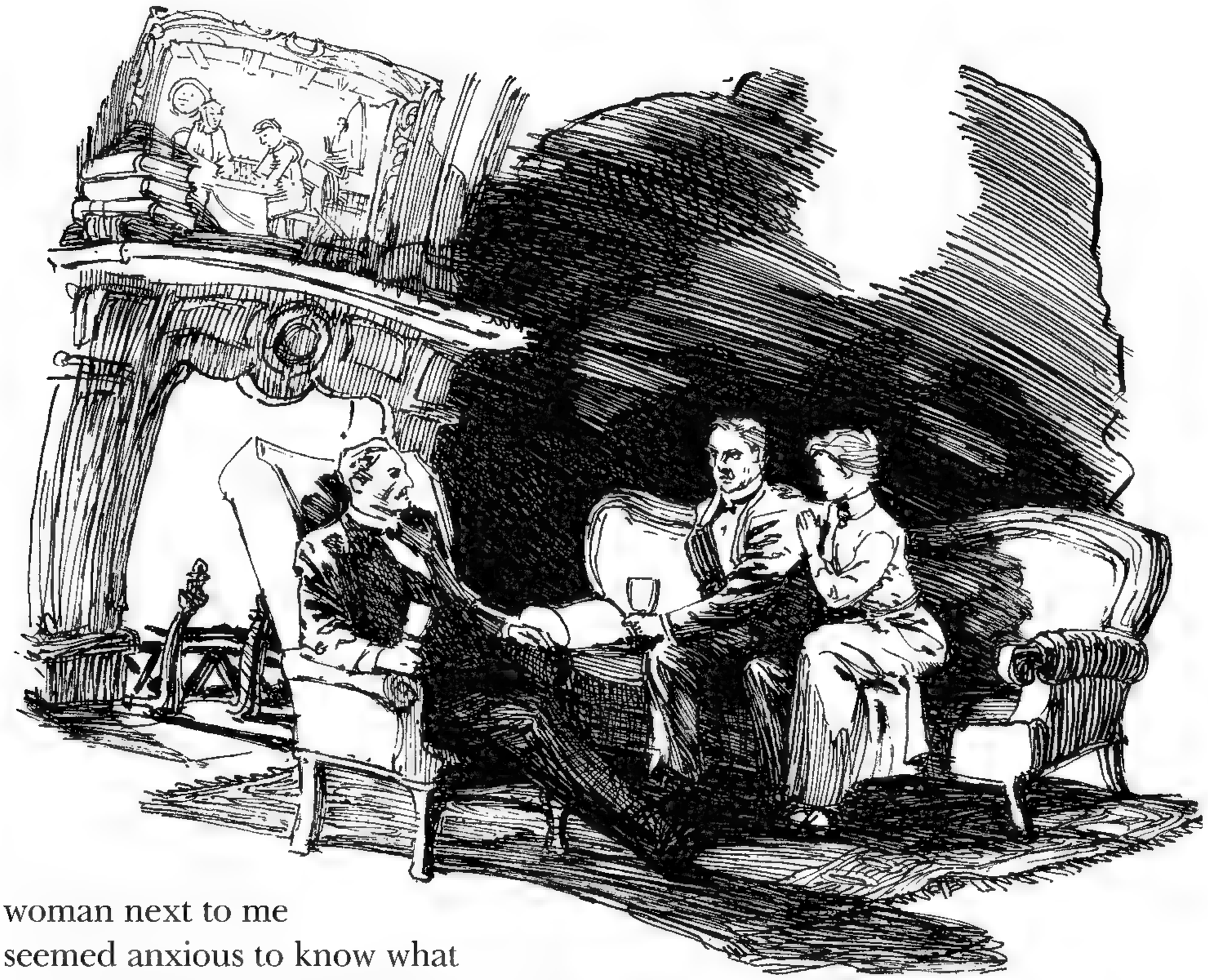
"So the wedding took place, and I went to it in a tall hat which I bought for the occasion, and the new Mrs. Broughton smiled very nicely at me

afterwards. As it had to happen, I took the Orient Express that evening and was not in England again for nearly six months. Just before I came back, I got a letter from Broughton. He asked if I could see him in London or come to Thurnley, as he thought I should be better able to help him than anyone else he knew. I had nothing to do, so after dealing with some small accumulation of business during my absence, I packed a kit-bag and departed to Euston. I was met by Broughton's great limousine at Thurnley Road station, and after a drive of nearly seven miles, I could see the Abbey across a wide pasturage.

"Broughton had seen me coming from afar, and walked across from his other guests to welcome me. There was no doubt that the man was altered, gravely altered. He was nervous and fidgety, and I found him looking at me only when my eye was off him. I naturally asked him what he wanted of me. I told him I would do anything I could, but that I couldn't conceive what he lacked that I could provide. He said with a lusterless smile that there was, however, something, and that he would tell me the following morning. It struck me that he was somehow ashamed of himself, and perhaps ashamed of the part he was asking me to play. However, I dismissed the subject from my mind and went up to dress in my palatial room.

"It was a very large low room with oak beams projecting from the white ceiling. Every inch of the walls, including the doors, was covered with tapestry, and a remarkably fine Italian fourpost bedstead, heavily draped, added to the darkness and dignity of the place. All the furniture was old, well made, and dark. Underfoot there was a plain green pile carpet, the only new thing about the room except the electric-light fittings and the jugs and basins. Even the looking glass on the dressing table was an old pyramidal Venetian glass set in a heavy repoussé frame of tarnished silver.

"After a few minutes' cleaning up, I went downstairs. Nothing much happened at dinner. The people were very much like those of the garden party. A young



woman next to me
seemed anxious to know what
was being read in London. As she was
far more familiar than I with the most recent magazines and literary supplements, I found salvation in being myself instructed in the tendencies of modern fiction. She was a cheerless soul, yet nothing could have been less creepy than the glitter of silver and glass, and the subdued lights and cackle of conversation all around the dinner table.

"After the ladies had gone I found myself talking to the rural dean. He was a thin, earnest man, who at once turned the conversation to old Clarke's buffooneries. But, he said, Mr. Broughton had introduced such a new and cheerful spirit, not only into the Abbey, but, he might say, into the whole neighbourhood, that he had great hopes that the ignorant superstitions of the past were henceforth destined to oblivion. Thereupon his other neighbour, a portly gentleman of independent means and position, audibly remarked, 'Amen,' which damped the rural dean, and we talked of partridges past, partridges present, and pheasants to come. At the other end of the table Broughton sat with a couple of his friends, red-faced hunting men. Once I noticed that they were discussing me, but I paid no attention to it at the time. I remembered it a few hours later.

"By eleven all the guests were gone, and Broughton, his wife, and I were alone together under the fine plaster ceiling of the Jacobean drawing room. Mrs. Broughton talked about one or two of the neighbours, and then, with

a smile, said that she knew I would excuse her, shook hands with me, and went off to bed. I am not very good at analyzing things, but I felt that she talked a little uncomfortably and with a suspicion of effort, smiled rather conventionally, and was obviously glad to go. These things seem trifling enough to repeat, but I had the faint feeling that everything was not quite square. Under the circumstances, this was enough to set me wondering what on earth the service could be that I was to render—wondering also whether the whole business were not some ill-advised jest in order to make me come down from London for a mere shooting party.

"Broughton said little after she had gone. But he was evidently laboring to bring the conversation around to the so-called haunting of the Abbey. As soon as I saw this, of course I asked him directly about it. He then seemed at once to lose interest in the matter. There was no doubt about it: Broughton was somehow a changed man, and to my mind he had changed in no way for the better. Mrs. Broughton seemed no sufficient cause. He was clearly very fond of her, and she of him. I reminded him that he was going to tell me what I could do for him in the morning, pleaded my journey, lit a candle, and went upstairs with him. At the end of the passage leading into the old house he grinned weakly and said, 'Mind, if you see a ghost, do talk to it; you said you would.' He stood irresolutely a moment and then turned away. At the door of his dressing room he paused once more: 'I'm here,' he called out, 'if you should want anything. Good night,' and he shut the door.

"I went along the passage to my room, undressed, switched on a lamp beside my bed, read a few pages of *The Jungle Book*, and then, more than ready for sleep, turned the light off and went fast asleep.

"Three hours later I woke up. There was not a breath of wind outside. There was not even a flicker of light from the fireplace. As I lay there, an ash tinkled slightly as it cooled, but there was hardly a gleam of the dullest red in the grate. An owl cried among the silent Spanish chestnuts on the slope outside. I idly reviewed the events of the day, hoping that I should fall off to sleep again before I reached dinner. But at the end I seemed as wakeful as ever. There was no help for it. I must read my *Jungle Book* again till I felt ready to go off, so I fumbled for the pear at the end of the cord that hung down inside the bed, and I switched on the bedside lamp. The sudden glory dazzled me for a moment. I felt under my pillow for my book with half-shut eyes. Then, growing used to the light, I happened to look down to the foot of my bed.

"I can never tell you really what happened then. Nothing I could ever confess in the most abject words could even faintly picture to you what I felt. I know that my heart stopped dead, and my throat shut automatically. In one instinctive movement I crouched back up against the headboards of the bed, staring at the horror. The movement set my heart going again, and the sweat dripped from every pore. I am not a particularly religious man, but I

had always believed that God would never allow any supernatural appearance to present itself to man in such a guise and in such circumstances that harm, either bodily or mental, could result to him. I can only tell you that at the moment both my life and my reason rocked unsteadily on their seats."

The other *Osiris* passengers had gone to bed. Only Colvin and I remained leaning over the starboard railing, which rattled uneasily now and then under the fierce vibration of the over-engined mail boat. Far over, there were the lights of a few fishing smacks riding out the night, and a great rush of white combing and seething water fell out and away from us overside.

At last Colvin went on:

"Leaning over the foot of my bed, looking at me, was a figure swathed in a rotten and tattered veiling. This shroud passed over the head, but left both eyes and the right side of the face bare. It then followed the line of the arm down to where the hand grasped the bed end. The face was not entirely that of a skull, though the eyes and the flesh of the face were totally gone. There was a thin, dry skin drawn tightly over the features, and there was some skin left on the hand. One wisp of hair crossed the forehead. It was perfectly still. I looked at it, and it looked at me, and my brains turned dry and hot in my head. I had still got the pear of the electric lamp in my hand, and I played idly with it; only I dared not turn the light out again. I shut my eyes, only to open them in a hideous terror the same second. The thing had not moved.

My heart was thumping, and the sweat cooled me as it evaporated. Another cinder tinkled in the grate, and a panel creaked in the wall.

"My reason failed me. For twenty minutes, or twenty seconds, I was able to think of nothing else but this awful figure, till there came, hurtling through the empty channels of my senses, the remembrances that Broughton and his friends had discussed with me furtively at dinner. The dim possibility of it being a hoax stole gratefully into my unhappy mind, and once there, pluck came creeping back along a thousand tiny veins. My first sensation was one of blind unreasoning thankfulness that my brain was going to stand the trial. I am not a timid man, but the best of us needs some human handle to steady him in time of extremity, and in this faint but growing hope that it might be only a brutal hoax, I found the fulcrum that I needed. At last I moved.

"How I managed to do it I cannot tell you, but with one spring toward the foot of the bed I got within arm's length and struck out one fearful blow with my fist at the thing. It crumbled under it, and my hand was cut to the bone. With a sickening revulsion after my terror, I dropped half-fainting across the end of the bed. So it was merely a foul trick after all. No doubt the trick had been played many a time before: no doubt Broughton and his friends had had some large bet among themselves as to what I should do when I discovered the gruesome thing. From my state of abject terror I found myself transported into an insensate anger. I shouted curses upon Broughton. I

dived rather than climbed over the bed-end of the sofa. I tore at the robed skeleton—how well the whole thing had been carried out, I thought—I broke the skull against the floor, and stamped upon its dry bones. I flung the head away under the bed, and rent the brittle bones of the trunk in pieces. I snapped the thin thigh bones across my knee, and flung them in different directions. The shin bones I set up against a stool and broke with my heel. I raged like a berserker against the loathly thing, and stripped the ribs from the backbone and slung the breastbone against the cupboard. My fury increased as the work of destruction went on. I tore the frail rotten veil into twenty pieces, and the dust went up over everything, over the clean blotting paper and the silver inkstand. At last my work was done. There was but a raffle of broken bones and strips of parchment and crumbling wool. Then, picking up a piece of the skull—it was the cheek and temple bone of the right side, I remember—I opened the door and went down the passage to Broughton's dressing room. I remember still how my sweat-dripping

pajamas clung to me as I walked. At the door I kicked and entered.

"Broughton was in bed. He had already turned the light on and seemed shrunken and horrified. For a moment he could hardly pull himself together. Then I spoke. I don't know what I said. I know only that from a heart full and over full with hatred and contempt, spurred on by shame of my own recent cowardice, I let my tongue run on. He answered nothing. I was amazed at my own fluency. My hair still clung lankly to my wet temples, my hand was bleeding profusely, and I must have looked a strange sight. Broughton huddled himself at the head of the bed just as I had. Still he made no answer, no defense. He seemed preoccupied with something besides my reproaches, and once or twice moistened his lips with his tongue. He could say nothing, though he moved his hands now and then, just as a baby who cannot speak moves its hands.

"At last the door into Mrs. Broughton's rooms opened and she came in, white and terrified. 'What is it? What is it? Oh, in God's name! What is it?' she cried again and again, and then she went up to her husband and sat on the bed in her night-dress, and the two faced me. I told her what the matter was. I spared her husband not a word for her presence there. Yet he seemed hardly to understand. I told the pair that I had spoiled their cowardly joke for them. Broughton looked up.

"'I have smashed the foul thing into a hundred pieces,' I said. Broughton licked his lips again and his mouth worked. 'By God!' I shouted, 'it would serve you right if I thrashed you within an inch of your life. I will take care that not a decent man or woman of my acquaintance ever speaks to you again. And there,' I added, throwing the broken piece of the skull upon the floor beside his bed, 'there is a souvenir for you, of your damned work tonight!'

"Broughton saw the bone, and in a moment it was his turn to frighten me. He squealed like a hare caught in a trap. He screamed and screamed till Mrs. Broughton, almost as bewildered as myself, held on to him and coaxed him like a child to be quiet. But Broughton—and as he moved I thought that ten minutes ago I perhaps looked as terribly ill as he did—thrust her from him, and scrambled out of bed on to the floor, and, still screaming, put out his hand to the bone. It had blood on it from my hand. He paid no attention to me whatever. In truth I said nothing. This was a new turn indeed to the horrors of the evening. He rose from the floor with the bone in his hand and stood silent. He seemed to be listening. 'Time, time, perhaps,' he muttered, and almost at the same moment fell at full length on the carpet, cutting his head against the fender. The bone flew from his hand and came to rest near the door. I picked Broughton up, haggard and broken, with blood over his face. He whispered hoarsely and quickly, 'Listen, listen!' We listened.

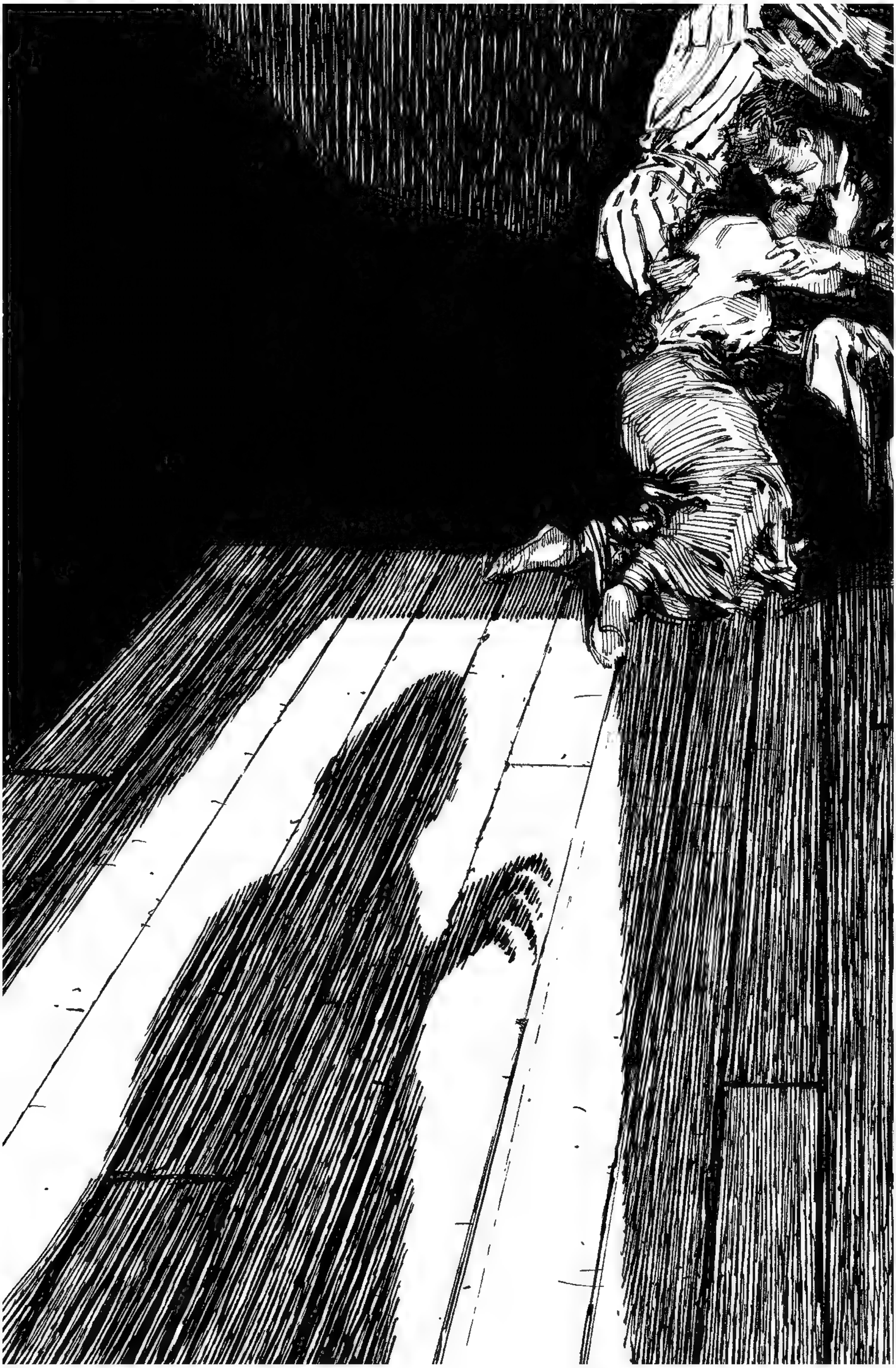
"After ten seconds' utter quiet, I seemed to hear something. I could not be sure, but at last there was no doubt. There was a quiet sound as one moving

along the passage. Little regular steps came toward us over the hard oak flooring. Broughton moved to where his wife sat, white and speechless, on the bed, and pressed her face into his shoulder.

"Then—the last thing that I could see as he turned the light out—he fell forward with his own head pressed into the pillow of the bed. Something in their company, something in their cowardice, helped me, and I faced the open doorway of the room, which was outlined fairly clearly against the dimly lit passage. I put out one hand and touched Mrs. Broughton's shoulder in the darkness, but at the last moment I too failed. I sank on my knees and put my face in the bed. Only we all heard. The footsteps came to the door and there they stopped. The piece of bone was lying a yard inside the door. There was a rustle of moving stuff, and the thing was in the room. Mrs. Broughton was silent: I could hear Broughton's voice praying, muffled in the pillow. I was cursing my own cowardice. Then the steps moved out again on the oak boards of the passage, and I heard the sounds dying away. In a flash of remorse I went to the door and looked out. At the end of the corridor I thought I saw something that moved away. A moment later the passage was empty. I stood with my forehead against the jamb of the door almost physically sick.

"'You can turn the light on,' I said, and there was an answering flare. There was no bone at my feet. Mrs. Broughton had fainted. Broughton was almost useless, and it took me ten minutes to bring her to. Broughton only said one thing worth remembering. For the most part he went on muttering prayers. But I was glad afterwards to recollect that he had said that thing. He said in a colourless voice, half as a question, half as a reproach, 'You didn't speak to her.'

"We spent the remainder of the night together. Mrs. Broughton actually fell off into a kind of sleep before dawn, but she suffered so horribly in her dreams that I shook her into consciousness again. Never was dawn so long in coming. Three or four times Broughton spoke to himself. Mrs. Broughton would then just tighten her hold on his arm, but she could say nothing. As for me, I can honestly say that I grew worse as the hours passed and the light strengthened. The two violent reactions had battered down my steadiness of view, and I felt that the foundations of my life had been built upon the sand. I said nothing, and after binding up my hand with a towel, I did not move. It was better so. They helped me and I helped them, and we all three knew that our reason had gone very near to ruin that night. At last, when the light came in pretty strongly, and the birds outside were chattering and singing, we felt that we must do something. Yet we never moved. You might have thought that we should particularly dislike being found as we were by the servants, yet nothing of that kind mattered a straw, and an overpowering listlessness bound us as we sat, until Chapman, Broughton's man, actually knocked and opened the door. None of us moved. Broughton,



speaking hardly and stiffly, said, 'Chapman, you can come back in five minutes.' Chapman was a discreet man, but it would have made no difference to us if he had carried his news to the 'room' at once.

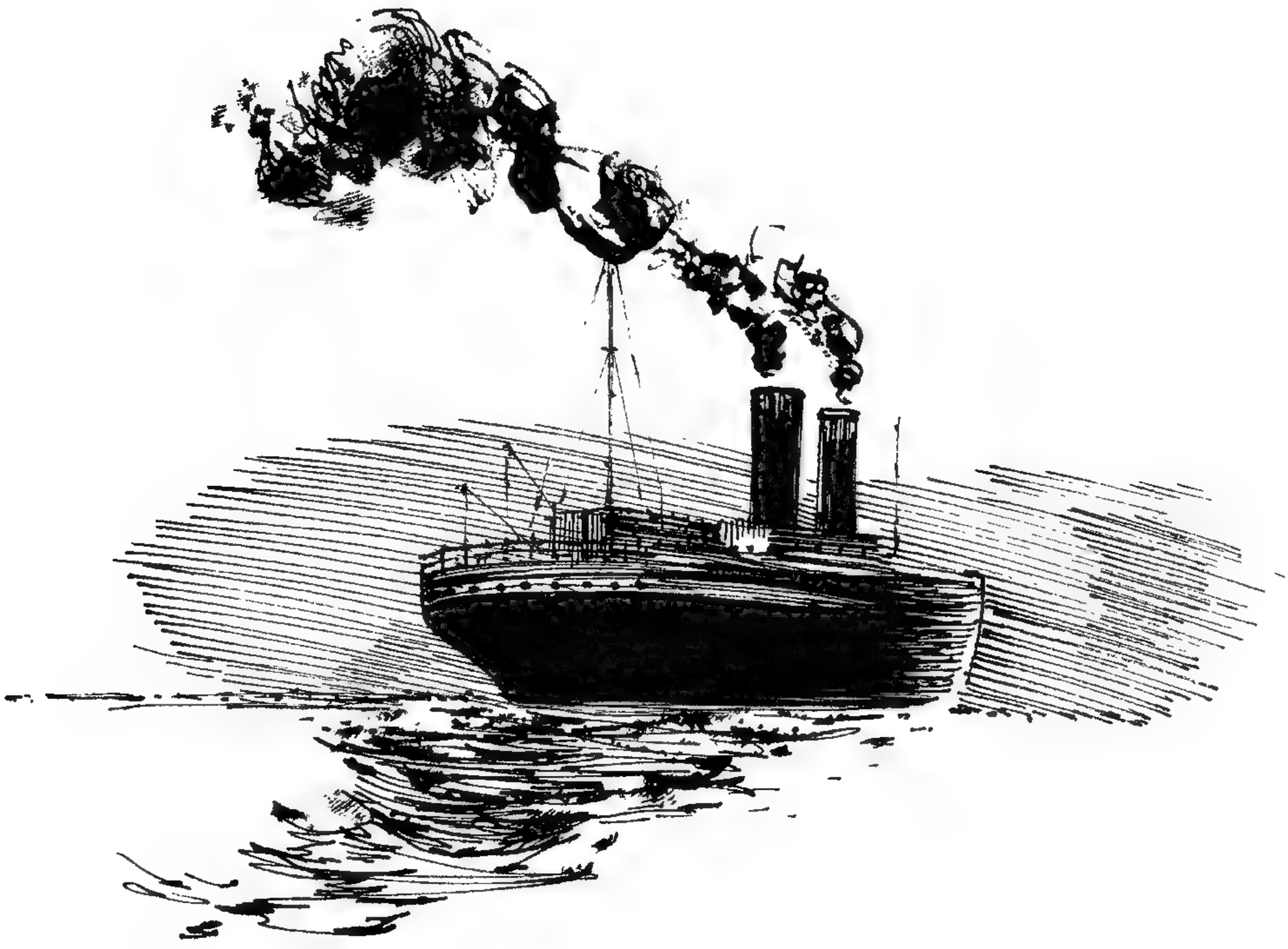
"We looked at each other and I said I must go back. I meant to wait outside till Chapman returned. I simply dared not re-enter my bedroom alone. Broughton roused himself and said that he would come with me. Mrs. Broughton agreed to remain in her own room for five minutes if the blinds were drawn up and all the doors left open.

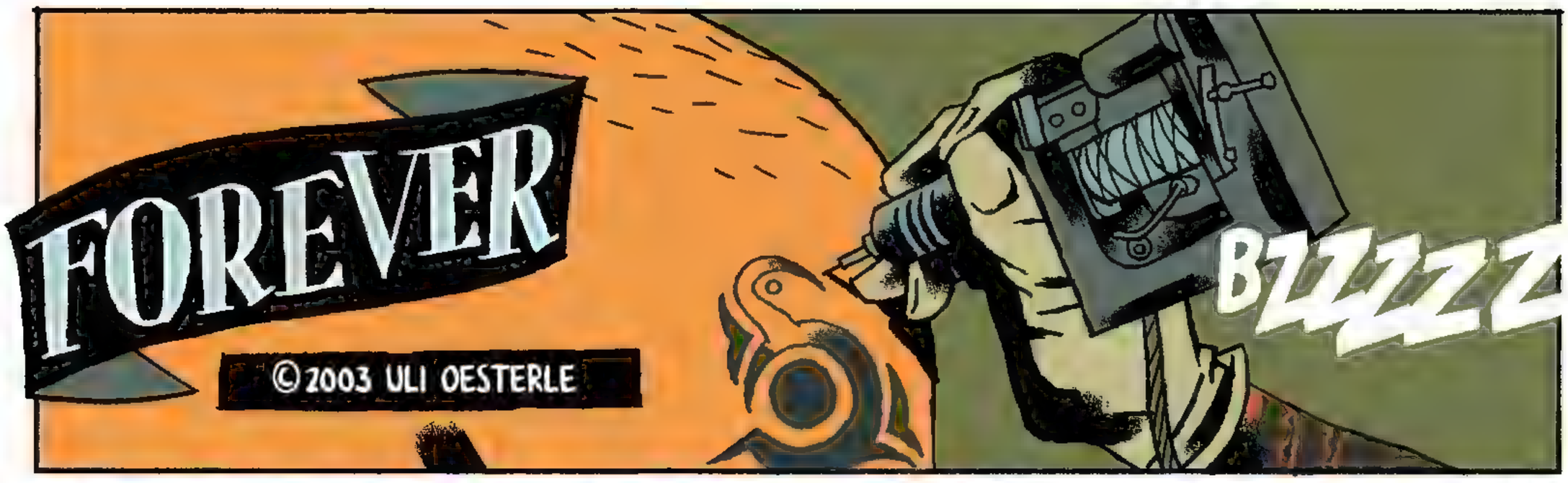
"So Broughton and I, leaning stiffly one against the other, went down to my room. By the morning light that filtered past the blinds we could see our way, and I released the blinds. There was nothing wrong with the room from end to end, except smears of my own blood on the end of the bed, on the sofa, and on the carpet where I had torn the thing to pieces."

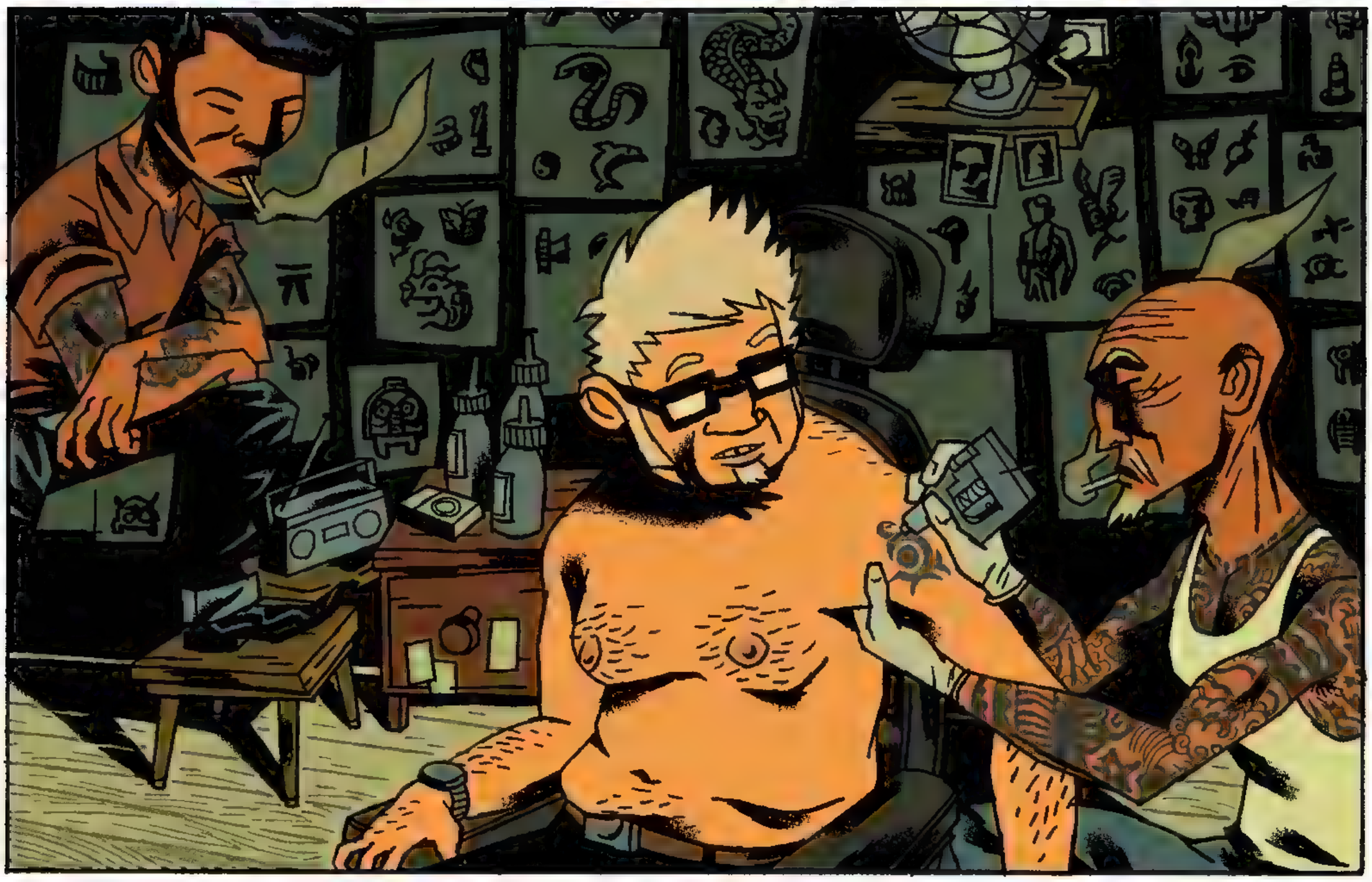
Colvin had finished his story. There was nothing to say. Seven bells stuttered out from the fo'c's'le, and the answering cry wailed through the darkness. I took him downstairs.

"Of course I am much better now, but it is a kindness of you to let me sleep in your cabin."

The End




FOREVER
©2003 ULI OESTERLE
BZZZZ



DOCTOR LE
ORIGINAL
CHINESE
TATT
HAMBUR
ST. PAULI
OPEN
HEY!
ORIGINA
CHINESE
TA
ST.
AL
ESE
TOOS

STOP! WAIT!

QUICK, GET GOING!

BUDDHA BUDDHA BUDDHA

KA-CHOOOOOM

?

HH - ME 245

SBOK

HOTEL

TRIN

ASTRA

THUD

HE HE
HE HE HE
HE HE HE
HE HE

HE FELL...
WE OUGHTTA
GO BACK.

DON'T BE
RETARDED.

... WE BARELY
TOUCHED HIM.
HE'LL BE FINE.

AND
WHAT IF HE
SUES US?

HANSE

EAT

SCREW
HIM!

YOU BETTER
CHECK THIS OUT
--A REAL BARGAIN!
SMART, EH?

4FT

GOD,
YOU'RE A
BASTARD!

KOF
KOF

REVENGE!

OOPH
OOPH
OOPH
OOPH

ONE WEEK AND SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS LATER...

...MY SQUAW WAS BEGINNING TO GET ON MY NERVES.

YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO BE INTO IT, BABE. WHERE WERE YOU?

I KEEP THINKING OF THAT TATTOOIST. I HOPE HE'S OKAY.

OH, JESUS! DON'T BE SUCH A GIRL.

BUT I AM A GIRL.

AND, BY THE WAY... WASN'T YOUR TATTOO SMALLER?

I JUST COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING.

NEXT MORNING, I WASN'T LAUGHING ANYMORE.

MARLA WAS RIGHT.

I WENT TO SEE A SPECIALIST, BUT HE COULDN'T MAKE ANY MORE SENSE OF IT THAN I COULD.

THEOBALD SKINNER DERMATOLOGIST

IT WAS GETTING BIGGER, CRAWLING ACROSS MY SKIN LIKE A GREEDY, BLACK COCKROACH.

ANOTHER TWO WEEKS PASSED, AND IT JUST GOT WORSE.
THE TATTOO COMPLETELY COVERED MY ARMS AND LEGS.
I WAS FORCED TO WEAR A TURTLENECK--
AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER.

HOW'S THAT JOHNSON PROGRAM GOING?

SMASHING! FABULOUS! ABSOLUTELY FIRST-CLASS.

WELL, THAT SOUNDS PROMISING... ER, WHAT'S THIS ON YOUR HAND?

I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CONCEAL IT MUCH LONGER.

OH, IT'S NOTHING.

ZUP

MY GODDAMN SKIN CONDITION HAVING A LIFE OF ITS OWN RATHER SPOILED OUR SOCIAL LIFE.

I MOST SINCERELY APOLOGIZE, SIR, BUT WE MUST URGE YOU TO LEAVE THE PREMISES OF OUR RESTAURANT.

LISTEN, YOU PANSY FAGGOT, WE'RE REGULARS HERE.

NOT ANY MORE.

I PHONED IN SICK AND STOPPED GOING TO WORK.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DIDN'T GO ANYWHERE.

I'VE BEEN A SELFISH JERK ALL MY LIFE, AND I'VE FINALLY RECEIVED THE BILL.

Dear Anton,
I cannot cope with this situation any longer. I'm leaving you since I loved you a long time ago but that's so long ago you are a Skinhead.
Farewell, Marlo.

MY FRIENDS--THE FEW I HAD, ANYWAY--TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY AND ENDED THEIR CONTACT WITH ME.

EVEN MY PARENTS WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME.

KLEP KLAP

LETTERS

I RECEIVED WRITTEN NOTIFICATION THAT I HAD LOST MY JOB, AND ANOTHER LETTER THREATENING ME WITH EVICTION FROM MY FLAT.

6

I WATCHED IN HORROR AS THE LAST CLEAR PATCHES OF MY SKIN FELL VICTIM TO THIS PLAGUE. MY LIFE AS I'VE KNOWN IT HAS TERMINATED.

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO.

IF DR. LEE WAS CAPABLE OF STARTING THIS THING IN MY BODY, HE SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO REVERSE IT. AND IF HE'S NOT WILLING, I HAVE SOME LEADEN ARGUMENTS ON MY SIDE.

DOCTOR LEE

ORIGINAL CHINESE TATTOOS HAMBURG ST. PAULI

ER, HI THERE... I'M LOOKING FOR CHENG LEE, THE TATTOO ARTIST.

HE DIED IN AN ACCIDENT A FEW WEEKS AGO.

...HE WAS MY FATHER...

...A CUSTOMER WHO DIDN'T WANT TO PAY HIT HIM WITH HIS CAR.

JESUS... I... I'M SORRY...

BAR

?

GOTTA GO!

HEF HEF HEF

BUTCH

DON'T.

I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU AT FIRST... MAN, THAT'S DEFINITELY MY FATHER'S WORK.

IT WAS YOU, RIGHT? YOU KILLED MY OLD MAN?

YES, BUT...

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME.

MY FATHER WAS PISSED. UNDERSTANDABLY SO, RIGHT? THIS IS AN ANCIENT CURSE DATING BACK TO OUR FOREFATHERS.

I'M SORRY?

I CAN TAKE IT FROM YOU. MY FATHER TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW.

COME WITH ME...

"...THESE THINGS TAKE TIME."

LUCKILY, I PREVENTED THAT IDIOT FROM PUNCHING AN UGLY HOLE IN MY OLD MAN'S LAST WORK-- HIS BEST ONE, TOO. NOW THE MASTERPIECE IS SAFE, PRESERVED AS IT SHOULD BE, IN THE BOSOM OF THE VENERABLE LEE FAMILY.

8

OEST ERLE 3/03

PFFT... I DON'T BELIEVE IN *GHOSTS*...

BUT GHOSTS ARE *EVERYWHERE*. YOU JUST NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

GGH!

COME THIS WAY AND LET ME SHOW YOU...

...The House On The Corner!

THIS HOME WAS BUILT IN 1882 AS A WEDDING PRESENT TO THE WOMAN WHO WOULD LIVE HERE. IT WAS CHERISHED DEARLY BY ITS RESIDENTS AND WAS EVENTUALLY PASSED DOWN FROM THE WOMAN TO HER DAUGHTERS.

THE HOUSE WAS OCCUPIED FOR EIGHTY-TWO YEARS, UNTIL THE LAST DAUGHTER DIED IN 1971. AFTER THAT IT SAT EMPTY FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS.

BY FREEWATER & MARANGON

"IN 1998 A RELATIVE OF THE PREVIOUS OWNER BOUGHT THE PROPERTY AND BEGAN TO RESTORE IT TO ITS ORIGINAL CONDITION.

"THE PARANORMAL EVENTS IN THE HOUSE STARTED OUT SLOWLY. THE NEW OWNER ENCOUNTERED ICY COLD SPOTS IN VARIOUS ROOMS. OFTEN, AFTER RAISING A WINDOW SHADE, HE WOULD RETURN ONLY TO FIND IT MYSTERIOUSLY LOWERED.

"AND, STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, THE CIRCUIT BOX HAD A HARD TIME STAYING IN THE *ON* POSITION."

UM... HELLO?

"WHEN THE NEW OWNER OF THE HOUSE FOUND A SANDER MOVED FROM ITS ORIGINAL RESTING PLACE TO THE CORNER OF THE ROOM, WITH ITS POWER CORD WRAPPED AROUND THE CLOSET DOOR, THE MEANING WAS UNCLEAR...

"...BUT THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE INTENT OF WHAT THEY FOUND THE NEXT DAY.

GO

"THIS OTHERWORLDLY MESSAGE WAS IGNORED, AND WORK ON THE HOUSE CONTINUED. AND SO DID THE HAUNTING."

HEY!

POP!

"IF THE GHOST COULDN'T GET THE NEW OWNER TO LEAVE, THEN AT LEAST IT COULD COMMENT ON THE REDECORATING CHOICES..."

IT ALSO APPEARS THAT THE GHOST WANTED TO HELP CLEAN UP. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THIS BROOM WAS FOUND STANDING ON ITS OWN. A SLIGHT VIBRATION COULD BE FELT IN ITS HANDLE, AND, DESPITE ATTEMPTS, IT COULD NOT BE MOVED.

"OTHER THAN THE PHOTO OF THE BROOM, ATTEMPTS TO DOCUMENT THIS HAUNTING MET WITH FAILURE. IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE GHOST DIDN'T WANT OUTSIDERS TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON.

"BUT OBVIOUSLY SHE HAD NO PROBLEM WITH SHOWING HERSELF TO HER NEW HOUSEMATES."

HEY... DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

HUH?

WHAT IS IT? YOU SEE SOMETHING?

AN OLD WOMAN. SHE'S LOOKING RIGHT AT US...

THE WOMAN WAS LATER IDENTIFIED FROM PHOTO-GRAPHS AS THE LAST DAUGHTER OF THE ORIGINAL OWNER. SHE DIED IN 1971.

SOON AFTER, THE HAUNTINGS GREW FEWER AND FEWER, AS THE PREVIOUS OWNER GREW TO ACCEPT HER NEW HOUSE-MATES.

SO NEXT TIME YOU DOUBT THE EXISTENCE OF GHOSTS, JUST TAKE A CAREFUL LOOK AROUND.

LIKE I SAID... THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.

End

—LUCAS— '03

IT WAS THE SUMMER THAT I WAS ELEVEN.

OR MAYBE WHEN I WAS TWELVE. YOU'D THINK I'D REMEMBER THE DETAILS -- CONSIDERING WHAT HAPPENED LATER -- BUT...

...WELL, I DON'T WANT TO GET AHEAD OF MYSELF.

SO, IT WAS THE SUMMER OF EITHER 1967, OR '68. I'D RIDDEN MY BIKE THE SWEATY FOUR MILES FROM HOME, UP THE BACKSIDE OF JORGENSEN'S HILL, TO OUR "HIDEOUT."

I WAS ALONE. MY FRIEND DENNIS WAS STILL RECOVERING FROM THE NASTY SPILL HE'D TAKEN RIDING WITH HIS BROTHER DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL.

A LESSON: DON'T RIDE TWO-ON-A-BIKE DOWN A MILE-LONG HILL ON A PAVED ROAD THAT TURNS INTO LOOSE GRAVEL AT THE BOTTOM.

PAUL CHADWICK 03

LIES, DEATH, AND OLFACTORY DELUSIONS

WRITTEN BY RANDY STRADLEY ART BY PAUL CHADWICK COLORS AND LETTERS BY MICHELLE MADSEN

I HID MY BIKE UNDER THE BRIDGE. NOBODY KNEW ABOUT OUR SECRET PLACE, AND WE MEANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

OF COURSE, A FEW YEARS LATER, I BROUGHT A GIRLFRIEND THERE FOR AN ABORTIVE MAKE-OUT SESSION. SHE NEVER FORGAVE ME FOR NOT WARNING HER ABOUT THE GOOEY STRANDS OF TAR HANGING UNDERNEATH THE BRIDGE. AND WE NEVER ACTUALLY MADE IT TO THE HIDEOUT...

GETTING IN WAS ALWAYS A PAIN -- LITERALLY. WE LOST COUNT OF THE NUMBER OF BLACKBERRY THORNS WE PULLED OUT OF OUR HANDS AND KNEES.

BUT WE FIGURED THE DISCOMFORT WAS THE PRICE WE PAID TO KEEP LESS ADVENTURESOME SNOOPS OUT.

THE ENTRANCE HAD PROBABLY BEEN MADE BY THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF A RACCOON.

WE WIDENED IT -- BUT ONLY A LITTLE...

OW.

THE REAL EXCAVATION WAS FURTHER IN.

THIS WAS OUR SPOT.

NOT MUCH GOOD IN BAD WEATHER -- THE RAIN CAME STRAIGHT THROUGH -- BUT IT WAS GREAT IN THE SUMMER.

I HAD NO REAL OBJECTIVE IN COMING TO THE HIDEOUT THAT DAY.

I HAD READ EVERY COMIC BOOK AND LOOKED AT EVERY PLAYBOY THAT WE HAD STASHED THERE UNTIL THEY WERE COMMITTED TO MEMORY.

I GUESS I JUST WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM MY SISTER AND HER FRIENDS.

"I'M 'DAPPLED,'" I REMEMBER THINKING.

AND THEN I NOTICED SOMETHING ELSE.

SNIFF SNIFF

I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS.

I HAD SMELLED THAT SMELL OFTEN ENOUGH...

...BUT HE COULDN'T HAVE FOUND THIS PLACE... COULD HE?

LARRY?

Hi.

GAH!

FUNNY. AS SCARED AS I'D BEEN TEN MINUTES EARLIER, I STILL STOPPED AT TROTTER'S GENERAL STORE FOR A GRAPE SODA...JUST LIKE ALWAYS.

MAYBE WHEN YOU'RE A KID YOU DON'T KNOW ENOUGH TO **KNOW** THAT STUFF LIKE THAT ISN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN, SO YOU LET IT GO SOONER THAN YOU WOULD OTHERWISE. SURE, IT WAS WEIRD. AND SCARY. BUT I NEVER MENTIONED IT. TO ANYBODY.

BESIDES, IT WAS EASTLING.

NOBODY IN OUR CLASS LIKED EASTLING.

EVERYBODY MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A SHARP PENCIL. I DON'T WANT ANY INTERRUPTIONS DURING THE TEST.

I'M GONNA MAKE MY PENCIL REALLY SHARP!

LARRY WAS ONE OF THOSE KIDS WHO WASN'T FRIENDS WITH **ANYBODY** -- THOUGH HE TRIED TO BE FRIENDS WITH **EVERYBODY**.

WORSE, HE **SMELLED**. BAD.

WHETHER IT WAS PURELY A QUESTION OF HYGIENE, OR IF HE SUFFERED FROM SOME ILLNESS OR OTHER UNAVOIDABLE SOURCE OF ODOR, I NEVER FOUND OUT.

NOT THAT IT WOULD HAVE MATTERED TO ANYBODY...

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

I **ASKED** IF SOMETHING IS WRONG.

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU CAN'T **BREATHE**.

NO. I'M ALL RIGHT.

THE HELL I WAS.

JUST A WHIFF OF LARRY COULD SINGE YOUR NOSE HAIRS.

HA! YOUR EYES ARE WATERING!

-GASP- SHUT UP, DENNIS.

I NEVER WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO BE MEAN TO LARRY, THE WAY SOME OF THE OTHERS DID.

I'D SPENT A FEW YEARS AS THE CLASS "MISFIT" MYSELF.

THAT COULD BE WHY HE ALWAYS TRIED HARDEST TO BE **MY** FRIEND.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY **I'M** TELLING THIS STORY...

I COULD HAVE FORGOTTEN THE INCIDENT AT THE HIDEOUT -- IF EVENTS HAD ALLOWED IT.

HOW'D YOU GET THOSE SCRATCHES?

BERRY BUSHES...

HOW WERE THINGS HERE, TODAY?

I GOT A CALL FROM VELMA ZIGLER AT THE WOMEN'S CLUB --

THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT ON RAINBOW LANE YESTERDAY.

A BOY WAS KILLED...

DENNIS LIVED ON RAINBOW LANE.

HE WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF HE WAS IN YOUR CLASS...

RELIEF. IT WASN'T DENNIS.

...DO YOU -- *DID* YOU -- KNOW *LARRY EASTLING?*

ISN'T HE THE ONE WHO STINKS?

VELMA SAID SOME OTHER KIDS CHASED HIM ONTO THE ROAD AND HE WAS HIT BY ONE OF THE TRUCKS FROM THE TILE FACTORY...

THAT EVENING SEEMED TO LAST FOREVER, BUT ALL I REMEMBER OF IT WAS A DULL ROAR IN MY EARS AND A COLD WEIGHT IN MY GUT.

LATER, I FOUND MOM DIGGING AROUND IN MY CLOSET.

WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING FOR?

MRS. ZIGLER SAYS THE EASTLING FAMILY DOESN'T HAVE MUCH MONEY.

YOU'VE OUTGROWN YOUR SUNDAY SUIT --

-- SO I'M DONATING IT TO THE EASTLINGS SO THEY CAN HAVE LARRY *BURIED* IN IT.

THOUGHTS OF LARRY AND DEATH STAYED WITH ME FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THAT, AND *SOMETHING ELSE.*

I'D NEVER KNOWN ANYBODY WHO'D DIED BEFORE.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MORTALITY AS A CONCEPT AND AS A *REALITY* PUT MY BRAIN INTO *OVERDRIVE.*

I RELIVED EVERY CRUELTY TOWARD LARRY -- NO MATTER HOW MINOR -- THAT I HAD EVER INSTIGATED, OR PARTICIPATED IN.

I TRIED TO MITIGATE AND RATIONALIZE MY ACTIONS, BUT I COULDN'T LIE TO MYSELF...

...I HAD BEEN AWARE OF LARRY'S LONELINESS AND HURT -- HAVING LIVED THROUGH A DEGREE OF THE SAME TREATMENT MYSELF.

I WAS GUILTY, AND LARRY WAS DEAD.

I WONDERED ABOUT LARRY.

I WONDERED IF DEATH HURT.

I MEAN, I WAS PRETTY SURE THAT BEING HIT BY A TRUCK HURT...

...BUT WHAT DID BEING DEAD FEEL LIKE?

I ASKED MY DAD ABOUT IT. HE SAID YOU DIDN'T FEEL ANYTHING -- YOU WERE DEAD.

MOM SAID YOU FELT FINE -- IF YOU WENT TO HEAVEN.

DENNIS AND I HAD THE INEVITABLE DISCUSSION: WHAT IF YOU WERE DEAD, BUT **AWARE** OF EVERYTHING THAT WAS HAPPENING TO YOUR BODY? HE SAID YOU'D FEEL IT IN YOUR TOES FIRST, BECAUSE THEY BURIED YOU BAREFOOT.

I DIDN'T MENTION THE OTHER THING TO ANYBODY...

...BUT THE SMELL WAS REALLY GETTING TO ME.

IT WAS LARRY, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

NO ONE ELSE IN THE HOUSE NOTICED.

YET HIS **ESSENCE** FILLED MY ROOM.

I KNEW WHERE IT WAS COMING FROM.

BY THE FIFTH NIGHT, I COULDN'T IGNORE IT ANY LONGER.

=GASP= LARRY...?

Y-YOU'RE DEAD...

YEAH... I GUESS.

BUT I DON'T SMELL BAD ANYMORE ...

... DO I?

N-NO... NOT ANYMORE...

THANKFULLY, I NEVER SAW -- OR SMELLED -- LARRY AGAIN.

I GUESS THAT EVEN THE SMALLEST GESTURE OF ACCEPTANCE MADE HIS DEPARTURE -- TO WHERE EVER HE WAS GOING -- EASIER FOR HIM.

I HAD DENIED HIM IN LIFE, YET HE STILL SOUGHT ME OUT.

I JUST HOPE LARRY NEVER FINDS OUT THAT I LIED TO HIM IN DEATH . . .

END

No one remembers how many nights the summoning took.

Some say as many as five, while others insist he arrived after the very first appeal.

This is understandable, given the fact that dogs aren't exactly known for their keen sense of time.

AH, THIS IS NUTS! I'M TIRED OF BARKIN' MY THROAT DRY NIGHT AFTER NIGHT FOR NOTHIN'.
MAYBE WE'RE DOING IT WRONG.
OH NO! MY GRANDPA TOLD ME WHEN I WAS A PUP... "HOWL AT MIDNIGHT, THREE STRONG."
then again, they did put grandpa down the next day.

IF YOU ASK ME, YOU'RE ALL PRIZE CHUMPS. WHOEVER HEARD OF A WISE DOG ANY-WAY? I MEAN, YOU SLOBS LICK YOUR OWN...
STIFLE IT, CAT, 'LESS YOU WANT TO LOSE A FEW LIVES.
SNIF, SNIF!
HEY! GUYS-- LOOK!

STRAY - by EVAN DORKIN & JILL THOMPSON

W-WELL, SIR, IT'S OUR FRIEND, JACK.

HE--WELL, IT'S AWFUL HARD TO DESCRIBE--

HE'S CRAZY! SAYS THERE'S A DEAD DOG LIVIN' IN HIS YARD!

PUGSLEY!

HMM.

WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?

HIS YARD'S RIGHT OVER HERE! FOLLOW ME!

HIT THE BRICKS, RAT BREATH. THIS IS CANINE BUSINESS.

AW, GO CHASE AN ONCOMING CAR!

THANK YOU FOR COMING, SIR.

WE ARE HONORED BY YOUR PRESENCE.

THIS IS MY FRIEND, JACK.

HE DESPERATELY NEEDS YOUR HELP.

HMM. SO, JACK, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

WELL, YOU SEE, SIR... MY FAMILY MOVED HERE JUST THIS SUMMER.

AND THEY BUILT ME A HOUSE. A REALLY WONDERFUL HOUSE, ACTUALLY.

BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP ONE FULL NIGHT IN IT.

BECAUSE IT'S HAUNTED.

Sniff Snif! Go ON. I'M LISTENING.

WELL, UH, FIRST IT GOT COLD. REALLY, REALLY COLD, EVEN ON WARM NIGHTS.

THEN I STARTED SMELLING THINGS, HEARING THINGS LIKE A DOG CRYING.

AW, THE HOUSE WAS PROBABLY JUST SETTLING.

CAN IT, PUGS.

"At first I thought I was having a nightmare--or that I ate some bad food. But every night it was the same."

WOOOOO

I HEARD THE CRIES TOO, FROM NEXT DOOR...

IT WAS AWFUL.

AH, YOU'RE BOTH EATIN' OUTTA THE SAME BOWL. I BEEN WALKED AROUND THE BLOCK A FEW TIMES AN' I NEVER HEARD NOTHIN' CRAZY LIKE THAT!

"Neither did my masters. They just thought I was sick. Three vets couldn't find anything wrong with me. The stupid pet psychic found plenty, though..."

JACK'S TELLING ME HE NEEDS MORE AFFECTION. MORE ATTENTION.

I AM NOT! I JUST WANT A DECENT NIGHT'S SLEEP!

PEOPLE! PLEASE DON'T LISTEN TO THIS MORON!

BUT THE SOUNDS DIDN'T STOP. THEY JUST GOT WORSE. I'VE BEEN AFRAID TO SLEEP IN MY HOUSE, EVEN IN THE RAIN!

HE WAS IN TERRIBLE SHAPE, SIR. THAT'S WHEN I CALLED A MEETING. AND WE DECIDED TO CALL FOR HELP.

YES, WELL, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME GREAT UNHAPPINESS TOOK PLACE HERE. I DO SENSE A COLD SPOT, WHICH OFTEN INDICATES A RESTLESS SPIRIT.

Y-Y-YOU MEAN A GHOST? A F-FOR REAL DEAD GHOST?

DO YOU ALL GOT WORMS? GHOSTS AIN'T REAL! THEM'S JUST STORIES. STUFF THEY TELL YOU AT THE PUPPY FARM TO KEEP YOU FROM RUNNIN' AROUND AT NIGHT.

YEAH, WELL, REAL OR NOT, IF I SEE SOME OLD GHOST, I'LL **BITE** IT. I'M NOT AFRAID!

WE MUST DIG OUT THE COLD SPOT. THE PROBLEM LIES BENEATH THE HOUSE. I AM SURE OF IT.

UH, MY OWNERS WON'T LIKE THIS. THEY'RE VERY PARTICULAR ABOUT THEIR YARD.

I COULD KILL A MOLE OR RACCOON AND THROW IT IN THE HOLE.

YOU'D LOOK LIKE A HERO.

UM, NO. THAT'S OKAY.

DON'T WORRY, BOY, ALL WILL BE WELL SOON.

RABIES. IT'S **GOTTA** BE! YOU'RE **ALL** NUTS.

...the earth gave up one of its secrets.

And so they dug deep down into the cold earth for what seemed like hours. and just when it seemed they could dig no further...

WHITEY, WOULD YOU **PLEASE** STOP SNIFFING MY ASS? I'M **WORKIN'** HERE!

oh. uh, sorry, ace... nervous habit.

WHOA. **HOLD UP.** I SEE SOMETHIN!

WOW! BONES! LOTS OF BONES! OH BOY OH BOY OH BOY!

QUIT DROOLIN', YOU DUMB ANIMAL. THOSE ARE DOG BONES.

ooooh. ick.

THERE'S A COLLAR, TOO! MIGHT HAVE SOME I.D.

SNIF. OLD. MAYBE FIFTY YEARS.

HER NAME WAS... TRIXIE.

SAY, DID IT JUST GET COLDER?

WHAT THE--?!

THAT PUNK. HE RAN LIKE A DAMN SQUIRREL.

HELL, EVEN **WHITEY** STOOD HIS GROUND. SURE, HE PISSED HIMSELF. BUT HE STAYED FIRM.

HMM. WE'LL NEED TO PERFORM A SUMMONING TO RELEASE THE SPIRIT. AND WITH THE DOBERMAN GONE, WE'LL NEED ONE MORE SET OF PAWS TO COMPLETE THE CIRCLE.

EEE-YIPE!

REX! WAIT!

HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE TO SIT HERE? MY TAIL FELL ASLEEP AN HOUR AGO!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR? HE SAID KEEP STILL, CAT.

IT'S ALL RIGHT. THE RITUAL ISN'T WORKING. HER SPIRIT SHOULD HAVE BEEN COAXED OUT BY NOW.

SOMETIMES THEY NEED A GOOD JOLT. SOMETHING TO SHAKE THEM LOOSE, YOU MIGHT SAY.

YEAH? WHAT KIND OF JOLT?

THIS KIND.

WHOA! HEY! HEY, FFT! FFT!

...

AW, ME AN' MY STUPID CURIOSITY. OW.

GRRRRUF RUF. ROWF ROWF

IT'S ALL RIGHT, TRIXIE.

YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS HERE.

WE WANT TO HELP.

CAN YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT HERE?

I... came such a long way...

My family was moving cross-country, but I got lost chasing a cat. I found my way back, but they were gone.

For months I trailed their faint scent.

Finally, just when I was about to give up, I tracked them to this neighborhood.

I ran the last few yards to the house, but in my excitement I failed to notice **the car.**

The driver read my tags, reeking of beer. Afraid that he'd killed his new neighbor's dog, he panicked and buried me in his yard.

But I wasn't dead, yet. I awoke in the dark, where I've been all these years...

...waiting for someone to answer my cry for help. Thank you, all of you.

Now I'm free to rejoin my family at last. It won't be hard to find them this time...

NO ONE SPOKE AFTER SHE'D GONE.

they buried her remains in silence.

YOU'LL HAVE NO MORE TROUBLES NOW. THIS DOG-HOUSE IS CLEAN.

I THINK WE'D ALL BEST GO HOME, NOW, BEFORE THIS STORM GETS WORSE.

YES, SIR. AND THANK YOU, SIR.

They padded off to their homes and hideaways, wondering if it had all been a dream.

Wondering what it would be like when the black dog came to claim them.

But Jack could only think of sleep.

ALL RIGHT, COME ON.

And how wonderful it was to have his house back.

THE END

The Dark Horse Book of Witchcraft

The Dark Horse Book of Witchcraft

Seven Weird Mysteries of Powerful Women and Supernatural Skill—told in Words and Pictures.

MacBeth

WRITTEN BY: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DRAWINGS: TONY MILLIONAIRE COLORS: JIM CAMPBELL

THRICE THE BRINDED CAT HATH MEW'D

THRICE AND ONCE THE HEDGE-PIG WHINED

HARPIER CRIES 'TIS TIME, 'TIS TIME

ROUND ABOUT THE CAULDRON GO; IN THE POISON'D ENTRAILS THROW! TOAD, THAT UNDER COLD STONE DAYS AND NIGHTS HAS THIRTY-ONE SWELTER'D VENOM SLEEPING GOT, BOIL THOU FIRST IN THE CHARMED POT

DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE; FIRE BURN, AND CAULDRON BUBBLE

FILET OF A FENNY SNAKE, IN THE CAULDRON BOIL AND BAKE;
EYE OF NEWT AND TOE OF FROG, WOOL OF BAT AND TONGUE OF DOG,
ADDER'S FORK AND BLIND-WORM'S STING, LIZARD'S LEG AND OWLET'S WING,
FOR A CHARM OF POWERFUL TROUBLE, LIKE A HELL-BROTH BOIL AND BUBBLE

DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE; FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE!

SCALE OF DRAGON, TOOTH OF WOLF, WITCHES' MUMMY, MAW AND GULF
OF THE RAVIN'D SALT-SEA SHARK, ROOT OF HEMLOCK DIGG'D IN THE DARK,
LIVER OF BLASPHEMING JEW, GALL OF GOAT, AND SLIPS OF YEW
SILVER'D IN THE MOON'S ECLIPSE, NOSE OF TURK AND TARTAR'S LIPS,
FINGER OF BIRTH-STRANGLED BABE DITCH-DELIVER'D BY A DRAB,
MAKE THE GRUEL THICK AND SLAB: ADD THERETO A TIGER'S CHAUDRON,
FOR THE INGREDIENTS OF OUR CAULDRON

DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE;
FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE

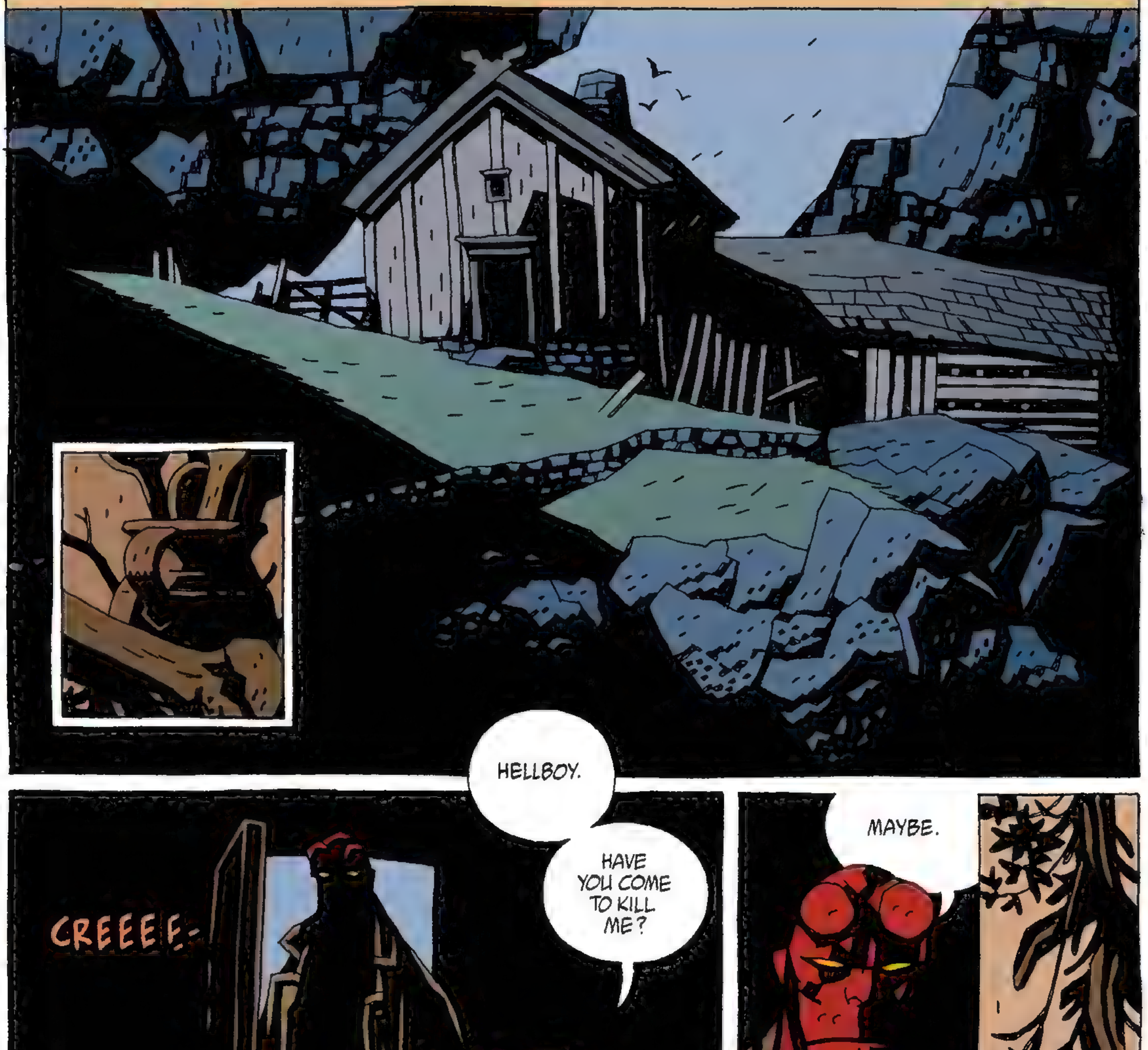
COOL IT WITH A BABOON'S BLOOD, THEN THE CHARM IS FIRM AND GOOD!

O WELL DONE! I COMMEND YOUR PAINS; AND EVERY ONE SHALL SHARE IN THE GAINS;

AND NOW ABOUT THE CAULDRON SING, LIVE ELVES AND FAIRIES IN A RING, ENCHANTING ALL THAT YOU PUT IN!

BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES! **OPEN, LOCKS, WHOEVER KNOCKS!**

The Troll-witch



COME.

SIT.

NO THANKS, I--

COME ABOUT THESE MURDERS. I KNOW.

CRUEL THINGS DONE. TOO SAVAGE TO BE THE WORK OF ANY MAN.

AND HOW MANY VICTIMS NOW?

AS MANY AS YOU KNOW, I TELL YOU TONIGHT THERE ARE MORE.

YOU SEEM TO KNOW A LOT. YOU MUST GET AROUND.

NOT I.

I'VE NOT LEFT THIS PLACE IN MANY YEAR...

"NO. THE WORLD COMES TO ME HERE, ON CROOKED FEET AND CROOKED WING..."

SO I KNOW WHAT GOES ON IN THE SECRET PLACES.

AND I KNOW ABOUT YOU...

YEAH, WELL, I DIDN'T COME HERE TO TALK ABOUT *ME*.

I KNOW. IT'S THE PEOPLE IN THE TOWNS WHO TALK ABOUT THESE MURDERS. WHAT DO *THEY* SAY?

TROLLS?

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND THE PEOPLE SENT YOU TO ME.

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND YOU KNOW WHY?

WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME.

IT'S A SAD STORY...

"ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO COULD BEAR NO CHILDREN...

"DESPAIRING, SHE SOUGHT OUT A WITCH AND GOT FROM HER TWO FLOWERS..."

SEE THAT YOU DO NOT EAT OF THE UGLIER OF THE TWO, BUT ONLY THE ONE THAT IS GOOD.

"SHE DID AS SHE WAS TOLD, ATE ONLY THE BEAUTIFUL FLOWER, AND WAS IN SHORT TIME DELIVERED OF A PERFECT AND BEAUTIFUL BABY GIRL.

"SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED, BUT WANTED TO GIVE TO HER HUSBAND A SON. SHE ATE THE SECOND FLOWER...

"AND GAVE BIRTH TO A SECOND GIRL...

"UGLY. STUNTED. TROLL-LIKE.

"YEARS PASSED, AND THE BEAUTIFUL SISTER BECAME MORESO, THE UGLY SISTER MORE DREADFUL. SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT OUT, BUT THE TWO LOVED EACH OTHER, AND THE ONE WOULD NOT BE PARTED FROM THE OTHER.

"THEN, ON A CHRISTMAS EVE, A RUCKUS AND ROARING WAS HEARD OUTSIDE THE HOUSE..."

MOTHER?

IT IS THE TROLLS COME TO HOLD THEIR YULE CELEBRATION. LEAVE THEM BE AND NO HARM WILL COME FROM IT.

"BUT THE POOR, WRETCHED, AND UGLY GIRL WOULD NOT LEAVE BE. THOUGH HER SISTER BEGGED HER TO STAY, SHE WENT OUT TO FIGHT WITH THEM..."

I WONDER WHY?

DO YOU THINK SHE SAW IN THEM THE THING THAT WAS MONSTROUS IN HERSELF?

"WHO CAN SAY. ONLY THAT SHE WAS ENRAGED WITH THEM AND FOUGHT THEM LIKE A BEAR.

"ALL MIGHT HAVE BEEN WELL, BUT THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL, WORRIED FOR HER SISTER, LOOKED OUT OF A WINDOW...

"...AND A TROLL SNATCHED OFF HER HEAD...

"...AND PUT IN ITS PLACE A COW HEAD...

"...AND SHE BECAME A COW."

CAN YOU IMAGINE THEN THE FURY OF THAT UGLY CHILD?

TAKING A WOODEN SPOON AND RIDING ON A GOAT, SHE WENT DOWN INTO TROLL-HEIM...

AND SHE KILLED A PILE OF TROLLS AND GOT HER SISTER'S HEAD BACK AND HER SISTER TURNED BACK INTO A PERSON AND MARRIED A PRINCE OR SOMETHING.

I *HAVE* HEARD THAT STORY.

A FAIRY TALE.

SHE LIVED AND DIED A COW...

HER BONES LIE THERE.

BUT HER SISTER DID BRING BACK HER HEAD.

SOMEDAY A WOMAN WHO IS WANTING CHILDREN WILL COME TO ME. I WILL GIVE HER THESE FLOWERS TO EAT, AND ALL HER CHILDREN WILL BE BEAUTIFUL...
NOT TROLLISH.

YEAH...

SISTER...

AH. BUT YOU WANT THESE MURDERING TROLLS.

THEY ARE ABROAD TONIGHT, BUT MUST BE UNDERGROUND BEFORE MORNING. THEY COME AND GO BY A CERTAIN CAVE I KNOW. YOU CAN GO THERE BEFORE THEM.

TAKE THIS.

ALL THESE YEARS AND IT IS STILL WET. IN THE WOOD IS THE SOUND OF THEIR BREAKING BONES.

"LAY IT AT THE ENTRANCE OF THAT CAVE.

"THEY WILL NOT DARE TO CROSS OVER IT...

"AND WHEN THE SUN RISES AND FINDS THEM...

AHH!

"THEY WILL TURN TO STONE.

"NO BLOW STRUCK...

"NO DROP OF BLOOD SPILLED..."

AND I WONDER... HOW WILL YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

THE END

Mother of Toads

by CLARK ASHTON SMITH

ILLUSTRATIONS *by* GARY GIANNI

"Why must you always hurry away, my little one?"

The voice of Mére Antoinette, the witch, was an amorous croaking. She ogled Pierre, the apothecary's young apprentice, with eyes full-orbed and unblinking as those of a toad. The folds beneath her chin swelled like the throat of some great batrachian. Her huge breasts, pale as frog-bellies, bulged from her torn gown as she leaned toward him.

Pierre Baudin, as usual, gave no answer; and she came closer, till he saw in the hollow of those breasts a moisture glistening like the dew of marshes ... like the slime of some amphibian ... a moisture that seemed always to linger there.

Her voice, raucously coaxing, persisted. "Stay a while tonight, my pretty orphan. No one will miss you in the village. And your master will not mind." She pressed against him with shuddering folds of fat. With her short flat fingers, which gave almost the appearance of being webbed, she seized his hand and drew it to her bosom.

Pierre wrenched the hand away and drew back discreetly. Repelled, rather than abashed, he averted his eyes. The witch was more than twice his age, and her charms were too uncouth and unsavory to tempt him for an instant. Also, her repute was such as to have nullified the attractions of even a younger and fairer sorceress. Her witchcraft had made her feared among the peasantry of that remote province, where belief in spells and philters was still common. The people of Averoigne called her La Mére des Crapauds, The Mother of Toads, a name given for more than one reason. Toads swarmed innumerably about her hut; they were said to be her familiars, and dark tales were told concerning their relationship to the sorceress, and the duties they performed at her bidding. Such tales were all the more readily believed because of those batrachian features that had always been remarked in her aspect.

The youth disliked her, even as he disliked the sluggish, abnormally large toads on which he had sometimes trodden in the dusk, upon the path between her hut and the village of Les Hiboux. He could hear some of these creatures croaking now; and it seemed, weirdly, that they uttered half-articulate echoes of the witch's words.

It would be dark soon, he reflected. The path along the marshes was not pleasant by night, and he felt doubly anxious to depart. Still without replying to Mére Antoinette's invitation, he reached for the black triangular vial she had set before him on her greasy table. The vial contained a philter of curious potency which his master, Alain le Dindon, had sent him to procure. Le Dindon, the village apothecary, was wont to deal surreptitiously in certain dubious medicaments supplied by the witch, and Pierre had often gone on such errands to her osier-hidden hut.

The old apothecary, whose humor was rough and ribald, had sometimes rallied Pierre concerning Mére Antoinette's preference for him. "Some night, my lad, you will remain with her," he had said. "Be careful, or the big toad will crush you." Remembering this gibe, the boy flushed angrily as he turned to go.

"Stay," insisted Mére Antoinette. "The fog is cold on the marshes; and it thickens apace. I knew that you were coming, and I have mulled for you a goodly measure of the red wine of Ximes."

She removed the lid from an earthen pitcher and poured its steaming contents into a large cup. The purplish-red wine creamed delectably, and an odor of hot, delicious spices filled the hut, overpowering the less agreeable odors from the simmering cauldron, the half-dried newts, vipers, bat wings, and evil, nauseous herbs hanging on the walls, and the reek of the black candles of pitch and corpse-tallow that burned always, by noon or night, in that murky interior.

"I'll drink it," said Pierre, a little grudgingly. "That is, if it contains nothing of your own concoction."

"'Tis naught but sound wine, four seasons old, with spices of Arabia," the sorceress croaked ingratiatingly. "'Twill warm your stomach and ..." She added something inaudible as Pierre accepted the cup.

Before drinking, he inhaled the fumes of the beverage with some caution but was reassured by its pleasant smell. Surely it was innocent of any drug, any philter brewed by the witch, for, to his knowledge, her preparations were all evil-smelling.

Still, as if warned by some premonition, he hesitated. Then he remembered that the sunset air was indeed chill, that mists had gathered furtively behind him as he came to Mére Antoinette's dwelling. The wine would fortify him for the dismal return walk to Les Hiboux. He quaffed it quickly and set down the cup.

"Truly, it is good wine," he declared. "But I must go now."

Even as he spoke, he felt in his stomach and veins the spreading warmth of the alcohol, of the spices ... of something more ardent than these. It seemed that his voice was unreal and strange, falling as if from a height above him. The warmth grew, mounting within him like a golden flame fed by magic oils. His blood, a seething torrent, poured tumultuously and more tumultuously through his members.

There was a deep soft thundering in his ears, a rosy dazzlement in his eyes. Somehow the hut appeared to expand, to change luminously about him. He hardly recognized its squalid furnishings, its litter of baleful oddments, on which a torrid splendor was shed by the black candles, tipped with ruddy fire, that towered and swelled gigantically into the soft gloom. His blood burned as with the throbbing flame of the candles.

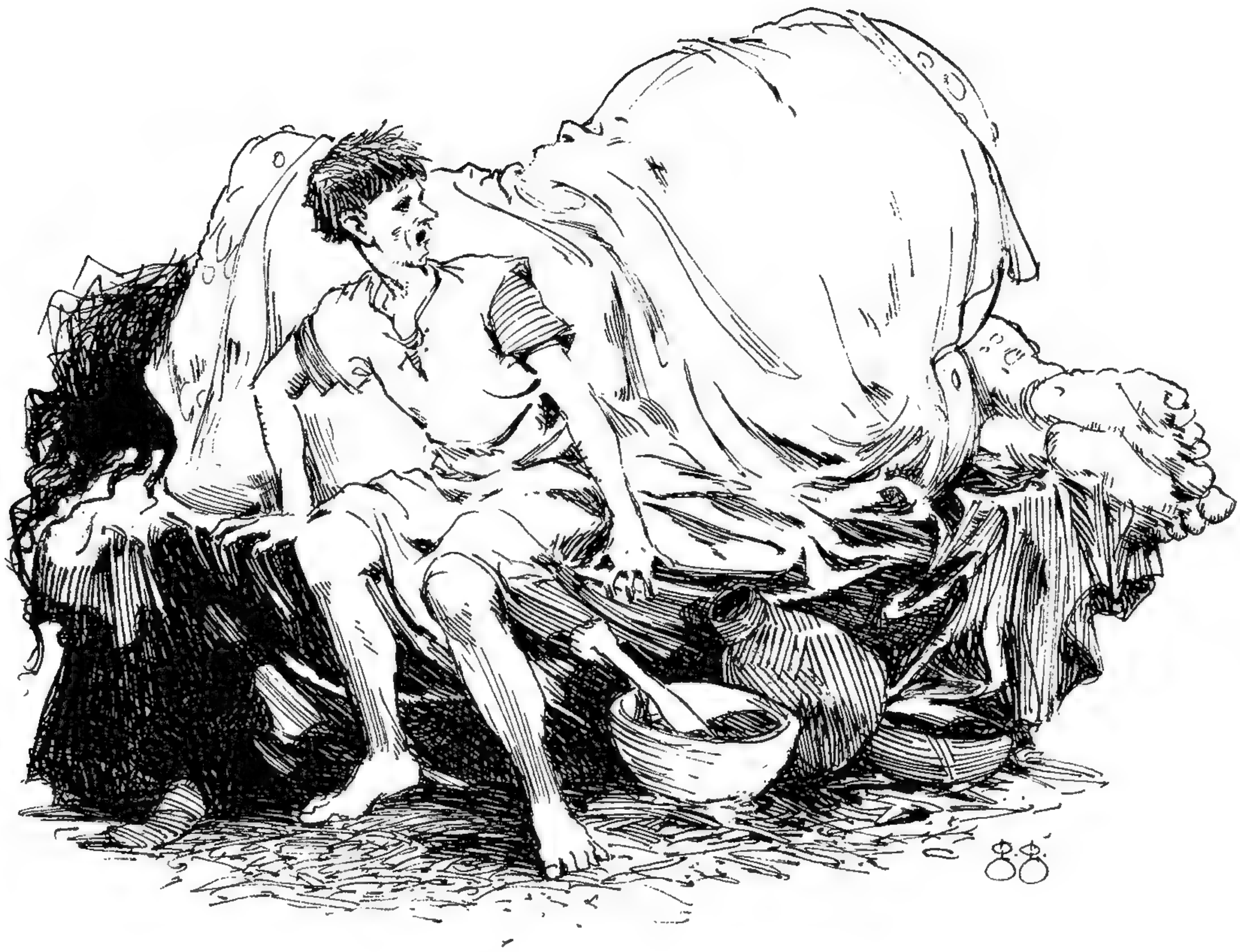
It came to him, for an instant, that all this was a questionable enchantment, a glamour wrought by the witch's wine. Fear was upon him and he wished to flee. Then, close beside him, he saw Mére Antoinette.

Briefly he marveled at the change that had befallen her. Then fear and wonder were alike forgotten, together with his old repulsion. He knew why the magic warmth mounted ever higher and hotter within him; why his flesh glowed like the ruddy tapers.

The soiled skirt she had worn lay at her feet, and she stood naked as Lilith, the first witch. The lumpish limbs and body had grown voluptuous; the pale, thick-lipped mouth enticed him with a promise of ampler kisses than other mouths could yield. The pits of her short round arms, the concave of her ponderously drooping breasts, the heavy creases and swollen rondures of flanks and thighs, all were fraught with luxurious allurement.

"Do you like me now, my little one?" she questioned.

This time he did not draw away but met her with hot, questing hands when she pressed heavily against him. Her limbs were cool and moist; her



breasts yielded like the turf-mounds above a bog. Her body was white and wholly hairless, but here and there he found curious roughnesses ... like those on the skin of a toad ... that somehow sharpened his desire instead of repelling it.

She was so huge that his fingers barely joined behind her. His two hands, together, were equal only to the cupping of a single breast. But the wine had filled his blood with a philterous ardor.

She led him to her couch beside the hearth where a great cauldron boiled mysteriously, sending up its fumes in strange-twining coils that suggested vague and obscene figures. The couch was rude and bare. But the flesh of the sorceress was like deep, luxurious cushions ...

Pierre awoke in the ashy dawn, when the tall black tapers had dwindled down and had melted limply in their sockets. Sick and confused, he sought vainly to remember where he was or what he had done. Then, turning a little, he saw beside him on the couch a thing that was like some impossible monster of ill dreams: a toadlike form, large as a fat woman. Its limbs were

somehow like a woman's arms and legs. Its pale, warty body pressed and bulged against him, and he felt the rounded softness of something that resembled a breast.

Nausea rose within him as memory of that delirious night returned. Most foully he had been beguiled by the witch, and had succumbed to her evil enchantments.

It seemed that an incubus smothered him, weighing upon all his limbs and body. He shut his eyes, that he might no longer behold the loathsome thing that was Mére Antoinette in her true semblance. Slowly, with prodigious effort, he drew himself away from the crushing nightmare shape. It did not stir or appear to waken, and he slid quickly from the couch.

Again, compelled by a noisome fascination, he peered at the thing on the couch—and saw only the gross form of Mére Antoinette. Perhaps his impression of a great toad beside him had been but an illusion, a half-dream that lingered after slumber. He lost something of his nightmarish horror, but his gorge still rose in a sick disgust, remembering the lewdness to which he had yielded.

Fearing that the witch might awaken at any moment and seek to detain him, he stole noiselessly from the hut. It was broad daylight, but a cold, hueless mist lay everywhere, shrouding the reedy marshes, and hanging like a ghostly curtain on the path he must follow to Les Hiboux. Moving and seething always, the mist seemed to reach toward him with intercepting fingers as he started homeward. He shivered at its touch, he bowed his head and drew his cloak closer around him.

Thicker and thicker the mist swirled, coiling, writhing endlessly, as if to bar Pierre's progress. He could discern the twisting, narrow path for only a few paces in advance. It was hard to find the familiar landmarks, hard to recognize the osiers and willows that loomed suddenly before him like gray phantoms and faded again into the white nothingness as he went onward. Never had he seen such fog: it was like the blinding, stifling fumes of a thousand witch-stirred cauldrons.

Though he was not altogether sure of his surroundings, Pierre thought that he had covered half the distance to the village. Then, all at once, he began to meet the toads. They were hidden by the mist till he came close upon them. Misshapen, unnaturally big and bloated, they squatted in his way on the little footpath or hopped sluggishly from the pallid gloom on either hand.

Several struck against his feet with a horrible and heavy flopping. He stepped unaware upon one of them, and slipped in the squashy putrescence it had made, barely saving himself from a headlong fall on the bog's rim. Black, miry water gloomed close beside him as he staggered there.

Turning to regain his path, he crushed others of the toads to an abhorrent pulp under his feet. The marshy soil was alive with them. They

flopped against him from the mist, striking his legs, his bosom, his very face with their clammy bodies. They rose up by scores like a devil-driven legion. It seemed that there was a malignance, an evil purpose in their movements, in the buffeting of their violent impact. He could make no progress on the swarming path, but lurched to and fro, slipping blindly, and shielding his face with lifted hands. He felt an eerie consternation, an eldritch horror. It was as if the nightmare of his awakening in the witch's hut had somehow returned upon him.

The toads came always from the direction of Les Hiboux, as if to drive him back toward Mére Antoinette's dwelling. They bounded against him, like a monstrous hail, like missiles flung by unseen demons. The ground was covered by them; the air was filled with their hurtling bodies. Once, he nearly went down beneath them.

Their number seemed to increase, they pelted him in a noxious storm. He gave way before them, his courage broke, and he started to run at random, without knowing that he had left the safe path. Losing all thought of direction in his frantic desire to escape from those impossible myriads, he plunged on amid the dim reeds and sedges, over ground that quivered gelatinously beneath him. Always at his heels he heard the soft, heavy

flopping of the toads; and sometimes they rose up like a sudden wall to bar his way and turn him aside. More than once, they drove him back from the verge of hidden quagmires into which he would otherwise have fallen. It was as if they were herding him deliberately and concertedly to a destined goal.

Now, like the lifting of a dense curtain, the mist rolled away, and Pierre saw before him in a golden dazzle of morning sunshine the green, thick-growing osiers that surrounded Mére Antoinette's hut. The toads had all disappeared, though he could have sworn that hundreds of them were hopping close about him an instant previously. With a feeling of helpless fright and panic, he knew that he was still within the witch's toils; that the toads were indeed her familiars, as so many people believed them to be. They had prevented his escape, and had brought him back to the foul creature ... whether woman, batrachian, or both ... who was known as The Mother of Toads.

Pierre's sensations were those of one who sinks momently deeper into some black and bottomless quicksand. He saw the witch emerge from the hut and come toward him. Her thick fingers, with pale folds of skin between them like the beginnings of a web, were stretched and flattened on the steaming cup that she carried. A sudden gust of wind arose as if from

nowhere, lifting the scanty skirts of Mére Antoinette about her fat thighs, and bearing to Pierre's nostrils the hot, familiar spices of the drugged wine. "Why did you leave so hastily, my little one?" There was an amorous wheedling in the very tone of the witch's question. "I should not have let you go without another cup of the good red wine, mulled and spiced for the warming of your stomach ... See, I have prepared it for you ... knowing that you would return."

She came very close to him as she spoke, leering and sidling, and held the cup toward his lips. Pierre grew dizzy with the strange fumes and turned his head away. It seemed that a paralyzing spell had seized his muscles, for the simple movement required an immense effort.

His mind, however, was still clear, and the sick revulsion of that nightmare dawn returned upon him. He saw again the great toad that had lain at his side when he awakened.

"I will not drink your wine," he said firmly. "You are a foul witch, and I loathe you. Let me go."

"Why do you loathe me?" croaked Mére Antoinette. "You loved me yesternight. I can give you all that other women give ... and more."

"You are not a woman," said Pierre. "You are a big toad. I saw you in your true shape this morning. I'd rather drown in the marsh waters than sleep with you again."

An indescribable change came upon the sorceress before Pierre had finished speaking. The leer slid from her thick and pallid features, leaving them blankly inhuman for an instant. Then her eyes bulged and goggled horribly, and her whole body appeared to swell as if inflated with venom.

"Go, then!" she spat with a guttural virulence. "But you will soon wish that you had stayed ..."

The queer paralysis had lifted from Pierre's muscles. It was as if the injunction of the angry witch had served to revoke an insidious, half-woven spell. With no parting glance or word, Pierre turned from her and fled with long, hasty steps, almost running, on the path to Les Hiboux.

He had gone little more than a hundred paces when the fog began to return. It coiled shoreward in vast volumes from the marshes, it poured like smoke from the very ground at his feet. Almost instantly, the sun dimmed to a wan silver disk and disappeared. The blue heavens were lost in the pale and seething voidness overhead. The path before Pierre was blotted out till he seemed to walk on the sheer rim of a white abyss that moved with him as he went.

Like the clammy arms of specters, with death-chill fingers that clutched and caressed, the weird mists drew closer still about Pierre. They thickened in his nostrils and throat, they dripped in a heavy dew from his garments.

They choked him with the fetor of rank waters and putrescent ooze ... and a stench as of liquefying corpses that had risen somewhere to the surface amid the fen.

Then, from the blank whiteness, the toads assailed Pierre in a surging, solid wave that towered above his head and swept him from the dim path with the force of failing seas as it descended. He went down, splashing and floundering, into water that swarmed with the numberless batrachians. Thick slime was in his mouth and nose as he struggled to regain his footing. The water, however, was only knee-deep, and the bottom, though slippery and oozy, supported him with little yielding when he stood erect.

He discerned indistinctly through the mist the nearby margin from which he had fallen. But his steps were weirdly and horribly hampered by the toad-seething waters when he strove to reach it. Inch by inch, with a hopeless panic deepening upon him, he fought toward the solid shore. The toads leaped and tumbled about him with a dizzying eddylike motion. They swirled like a viscid undertow around his feet and shins. They swept and swelled in great loathsome undulations against his retarded knees.

However, he made slow and painful progress, till his outstretched fingers could almost grasp the wiry sedges that trailed from the low bank. Then, from that mist-bound shore, there fell and broke upon him a second deluge of those demoniac toads; and Pierre was borne helplessly backward into the filthy waters.

Held down by the piling and crawling masses, and drowning in nauseous darkness at the thick-oozed bottom, he clawed feebly at his assailants. For a moment, ere oblivion

came, his fingers found among them the outlines of a monstrous form that was somehow toadlike ... but large and heavy as a fat woman. At the last, it seemed to him that two enormous breasts were crushed closely down upon his face.

The End

LOUISIANA, 1838.

THERE ARE STORIES THAT HISTORY RECORDS; OTHERS REMAIN IN TWILIGHT. TALES SUCH AS THESE ARE THE SOUL OF THE OLD SOUTH.

ONE SUCH STORY CONCERNS CHARLES DE MALBOROUGH, SON OF A WEALTHY PLANTER.

IT SEEMS THAT YOUNG CHARLES HAD THE POOR JUDGMENT TO SOMEHOW INSULT AN ACCOMPLISHED DUELIST.

THE PARTICULAR OFFENSE IS NOW LONG FORGOTTEN, BUT THE RESULT WAS THAT DE MALBOROUGH QUICKLY FOUND HIMSELF EXPECTED, AT DAWN, UPON THE FIELD OF HONOR.

DE MALBOROUGH KNEW HE WOULD NEED A MIRACLE IF HE WERE TO SURVIVE THE DUEL -- AND THAT'S JUST WHAT HE HOPED TO FIND . . . DEEP IN MANCHAC SWAMP.

THE GRIS-GRIS

BY JIM AND RUTH KEEGAN

I NEED A MAN TO DIE TONIGHT.

HMMM...

I'D NEED A *PERSONAL* ITEM.

A DROP OF HIS **BLOOD**.

A LOCK OF HIS **HAIR**.

YOU *GOT* SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

NO, I . . . I DON'T.

BUT I HAVE MONEY . . . I CAN PAY.

I DON'T NEED NO MONEY. I JUST TAKE A SMALL TOKEN -- SOMETHING NICE --

SOMETHING LIKE THAT FINE HAT YOU'RE WEARING.

FORGET MY DAMNED HAT! LISTEN, A MAN IS GOING TO KILL ME UNLESS YOU HELP.

OH, IF IT'S ***PROTECTION*** YOU'RE LOOKING FOR . . .

. . . I GOT PLENTY OF THAT.

AHHH . . . THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED.

THIS HERE'S A GRIS-GRIS. HE CAN BE GOOD, OR BAD. I TELL HIM TO BE GOOD. KEEP YOU SAFE.

YOU WEARS IT LIKE THIS.

SO . . . WHEN HE SEES THIS, HE'LL DROP OVER DEAD. IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?

NOW, I DIDN'T SAY NOTHIN' LIKE THAT.

I SAID HE'LL KEEP YOU SAFE, THAT'S ALL.

THAT'S ALL?!

YOU DAMNED FOOL! THIS MAN'S GOING TO KILL ME TOMORROW!

I CAME HERE TO BUY ASSURANCE OF HIS DEATH, NOT A DEAD BAT ON A STRING!

IF THAT'S THE BEST YOU'VE GOT, YOU CAN GO TO THE DEVIL!

DAWN ARRIVED QUICKLY, AND WITH IT, THE DUEL.

EIGHT . . .

NINE . . .

TEN.

TURN AND FIRE.

TURN AND FIRE!

SIR, YOU MUST TURN!

MY GOD, YOU'RE NOT EVEN A MAN.

YOU'RE NOT WORTHY OF MY BULLET!

BLAM!

YOU MAY GET UP NOW, SIR, AND CEASE YOUR **PATHETIC SHIVERING!** MY BULLET FINDS MORE **HONOR** RESTING IN THE ***DIRT*** . . .

THAN IN YOUR **COWARDLY** HIDE!

YOU MAY THINK ME A **COWARD** . . .

KA-BLAM!

. . . BUT AT LEAST I'M **NOT A FOOL!**

MY GOD, SIR, HAVE YOU NO **DECENCY?!**

HE TOOK HIS SHOT, AND I TOOK **MINE!**

DECENCY BE **DAMNED!**

CHARLES DE MALBOROUGH!

MY LITTLE BAT KEEP YOU SAFE, JUST LIKE I SAID.

I'LL TAKE HIM BACK NOW, AND MAYBE YOU PAY ME SOME SMALL TOKEN.

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH YOU FOUL HAG!

THWACK!

YOUR "MAGIC" HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT, OLD WOMAN! I'LL SEE YOU IN **HELL** BEFORE I PAY YOU!

NOW, GET OUT OF MY WAY, OR I'LL . . .

WWWIIIEEYYYHHH

DEAR, GOD!

MY LEG-- HELP ME!

AIN'T NOBODY CAN HELP YOU NOW.

I WARNED YOU ABOUT MY LITTLE FRIEND.

HE CAN BE *GOOD* ...

...OR HE CAN BE *BAD.*

I--

GOOD LORD!

CHARLES DE MALBOROUGH WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN.

AND FROM THAT DAY, NO CROP GREW ON HIS PLANTATION.

HIS FAMILY, THOSE WHO DID NOT SICKEN AND DIE MYSTERIOUSLY, FELL INTO POVERTY.

TODAY, NO ONE BY THE NAME DE MALBOROUGH LIVES IN THE PARISH.

BUT YOU CAN STILL SEE THE BATS --

EVERYWHERE.

THE END

Golden Calf Blues

Leviticus, Mississippi. 1936.

GENERAL STORE

CAFE

THOSE PLAY THE JUKE GUITAR WERE BORN TO LEAD A WICKED, SINFUL LIFE.

OL' FOLKS, JUST OFF THE BOAT, USE TA CALL IT ...

...THE DEVIL'S INSTRUMENT.

5¢

Nehri Cola

PIPE or CIGARETTE

New and

Forgotten

'AT'S PURTY CHEAP. WHAT'S IT--BROKE?

DON'T LOOK BROKE.

I'LL LET IT GO FOR TWO DOLLARS, CASH MONEY.

WHUT'S WRONG WITH IT?

'AT THERE--'AT USE TA BELONG T' BILL PENNY.

By Mark Ricketts & Sean Phillips

BILL PENNY. LORD HAVE MERCY.

LORD AIN'T GOT NO MERCY FOR THE LIKES OF BILL PENNY, MA'AM.

CAN'T AFFORD A RADIO.

AND TWO DOLLARS IS A GOOD PRICE.

SOUNDS REAL GOOD TOO, MAMA.

WELL, I GUESS IT DOES AT THAT.

I'LL TAKE IT.

WHO'S BILL PENNY, MAMA?

A BAD MAN.

DID HE KILL SOMEBODY?

I DARE NOT SPEAK HIS SINS.

BUT I WILL TELL YOU ONE THING...

...HIS EVIL WAS SUCH THAT THE GOOD CHRISTIAN PEOPLE OF THIS TOWN REFUSED HIM BURIAL ON SACRED GROUND.

THAT'S WHY HIS HEADSTONE SITS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CEMETERY WALL. AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.

SOME FOLKS-- FOLKS LIKE BILL PENNY--THEY DON'T DESERVE PASSAGE TO GOD'S KINGDOM.

THAT'S A MOURNFUL TUNE YOU'RE PLAYIN', SON.

SETH, HONEY, PLAY SOMETHIN' WITH SOME JUMP TO IT. SUMP'IN' CHEERY FOR THE REVEREND.

I TRIED, MAMA. IT'S JUST, THIS OL' GUITAR DON'T PLAY NUTHIN' BUT BLUE NOTES.

DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MUSICAL THINGS...

BUT I DO ...KNOW IT'S NOT TH' INSTRUMENT PICKS THE KEY.

SOUNDS BETTER BLUE. 'AT'S ALL I KNOW.

SAD AS A WIDOW'S MOAN. SORROWFUL AS A CONDEMNED MAN'S HOWL.

IT'S A GIFT FROM GOD, I GUESS.

YES SISTER, IT SURE IS.

PRAISE THE LORD.

That Sunday...

ON MT. SINAI, THE ISRAELITES MADE THEIR COMMITMENT TO KEEP GOD'S LAW.

"ALL THAT YOU HAVE COMMANDED, WE SHALL DO." THAT WAS THEIR PLEDGE.

YET WITHIN A FEW DAYS THE ISRAELITES HAD VIOLATED THOSE VERY LAWS...

...AND BOWED DOWN BEFORE A GOLDEN CALF.

twang!

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR PLEDGE TO THE ALMIGHTY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

OR DO YOU FIND YOURSELF STANDING AT THAT FORK IN THE ROAD...

...WONDERING WHICH PATH TO TAKE?

WHO AMONG YOU...

...WILL CHOOSE THE PATH TO RIGHTEOUSNESS?

...AND WHO AMONG YOU...

...WILL BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL'S CALL...

...AND FOLLOW THAT RASCAL...

...DOWN THE PATH TO PERDITION?

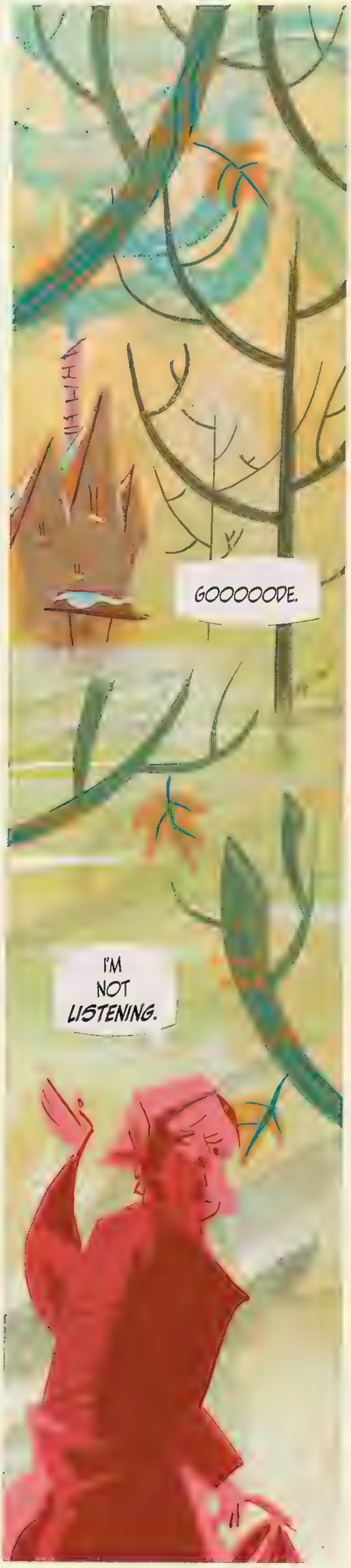
REVEREND THORNE, WHY'D EVERYONE UP AN' LEAVE?

WHAT THEY GOT OVER THERE?

Bill Penny 1899-1929

A GOLDEN CALF.

The End


GOOOOODE.
I'M NOT LISTENING.

SALEM AND MARY SIBLEY
BY SCOTT MORSE
GOOOODE.
YOU KILLED MY COW.

MY COW.
MY MILK.
MY TIME ON GOD'S GREEN EARTH.
WITCH.
I AIN'T.
I JUST STOLE SOME MILK THAT TIME, IN THE BARN.

TITUBA! COME IN! DON'T TALK TO OL' SARAH GOODE!

TITUBA! COME TELL OUR FORTUNES!

TITUBA, JUST SOME *LITTLE BIT* OF MILK, THEN?

WHAT? MISS GOODE, YOU *LEAVE* NOW. YOU *GO*. NO BEGGING.

GO. I HAVE WORK OUT BACK.

IN A LITTLE BIT, GIRLS.

JUST SOME...

TITUBA WILL GIVE SOME MILK.

TITUBA, YOU *WILL*, RIGHT?

TITUBA.

TITUBA, YOU HAVEN'T SPOKEN OF MY *VISITS*, OF OUR *AFFAIR*, I'M HOPEFUL? YOU HAVEN'T *MENTIONED* ME?

NO, REV'RUN BURROUGHS...

I'LL SEND *SPECTRES* TO VISIT IF YOU DO, SAVAGE HEART.

WITCH.

I'LL SEND *MARY SIBLEY* TO VISIT...

TITUBA!

COME PLAY!

WHY'S SHE ALL ALONE OUT THERE WHEN SHE COULD BE IN *HERE?*

SHE HAS CHORES, SAME AS ANY SLAVE.

SHE'S COMIN', SHE'S COMIN'.

WELL, TITUBA TELLS *MY* FORTUNE FIRST.

NO NO! WE'RE USING *MY* EGG!

IT'S *MY* CANDLE...

TITUBA, COME, PLEASE, BEFORE FATHER RETURNS...

I BROUGHT AN EGG, AS YOU ASKED...

DO THE EGGWHITE! USE YOUR INDIAN SPELL!

WILL I MARRY WILLIAM PROCTOR?

WHY WERE YOU TALKING TO SARAH GOODE? SHE'S *POOR.*

WILL I MARRY FATHER? *HEEHEE!*

RED RATS...

...TALKING CATS...

...A DOG...OR HOG...

...AND A MAN IN BLACK...

RED RATS? FOR...FOR REAL?

CAT'S DON'T TALK.

A MAN IN BLACK? LIKE THAT REVEREND BURROUGHS?

WITCH.

WHO SAID THAT?

TITUBA... I'M SCARED.

AAAIIGGHHH! A SPECTRE!

IN THE WINDOW! IN THE WINDOW!

OLD MARY SIBLEY!

TITUBA CONJURED A SPECTRE...

MARY SIBLEY, I AIN'T NO WITCH... YOU *GO*, NOW! GO LOOK IN SOME *OTHER* WINDOW!

YOU'RE *SCARIN'* THESE GIRLS, NOW! *GO ON!*

TITUBA TALKS TO *GHOSTS*...

WITCH.

THE GIRLS ARE *BEDEVILED.*

THE TOWN'S *MENFOLK* WILL SEEK SOMEONE TO *HANG* FOR IT.

BAKE A *WITCH CAKE* AND SEE WHO IS *NAMED.*

WITCH.

BAKE IT WITH THE *URINE* OF THE *GIRLS.*

FEED IT TO A *DOG.*

IF THE DOG ACTS *ENTRANCED,* AS THE *GIRLS* DO...

...*SALEM WILL KNOW THERE'S A WITCH.*

YOU WERE CHARGE OVER THE *CHILDREN,* YES?

TITUBA!

FORE-TOLD *FUTURES?*

YOU *TAUGHT* THEM *BLACK SPELLS?*

SLAVE!

YESSAH, BUT...

TITUBA...

WITCHCRAFT?

GIRLS, IS THERE A *WITCH* AMONG US?

Y E S .

GIRLS... JUST *ONE?*

NO.

MORE.

MORE.

TRUE, TITUBA?

I...I *DO* TELL TH' FORTUNES FOR THEM GIRLS, YESSAH, BUT...

THE GIRLS SAY YOU *CONJURE SPIRITS.*

WHO'S THIS *MAN IN BLACK* THEY SPEAK OF?

REVRUN BURROUGHS? HE'S... *HE AN' ME, WE...* ...WE...

GOODE.

MY COW...

OH, SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

GOODE.

IN 1692, IN AND AROUND SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, UPWARDS OF 25 PEOPLE, ALL REPUTEDLY PRACTITIONERS OF THE DARK ARTS, WERE KILLED IN A HYSTERICAL PURITAN INQUISITION.

MOST HISTORIANS CLAIM THAT A WOMAN NAMED MARY SIBLEY TOLD THE SLAVE TITUBA TO BAKE A "WITCH CAKE", THE FIRST "PROOF" THAT WITCHCRAFT WAS AFOOT.

HOWEVER, GENEOLOGY RECORDS SHOW THAT MARY SIBLEY DIED DECEMBER 28,1683...

...NINE YEARS *BEFORE* THE SALEM WITCH ACCUSATIONS.

AS THEY TELL IT NOW, THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE WAS THE BIRDS.

THERE WEREN'T ANY.

THE SQUIRRELS DISAPPEARED SOON AFTER.

FOR TWO NIGHTS STRANGE CRIES COULD BE HEARD FROM DEEP WITHIN THE DARK WOODS.

AND THEN...

THE CATS CAME.

the UNFAMILIAR by EVAN DORKIN AND JILL THOMPSON 2004

PPSST! GUYS!

THERE THEY ARE AGAIN!

THAT'S A LOT OF BAD LUCK CROSSING OUR PATH!

I SAY WE CHASE 'EM OFF!

BUTCHIE TRIED THAT. HE'S STILL AT THE VET.

I heard they spit poison.

YEAH, WHITEY? I HEARD YOU'RE BRAIN DEAD.

STILL, they SMELL SO... UNNATURAL.

JUST 'CAUSE YOUR DOGHOUSE WAS HAUNTED DON'T MEAN EVERYTHING'S SPOOKS!

MAYBE THE ORPHAN KNOWS SOMETHING!

all I know is your BREATH STINKS...

C'MON, GUYS, THIS is SERIOUS!

SOMETHIN's Gotta Get DONE HERE!

SOMETHING WILL BE DONE.

CRIPES! YOU SCARED THE KIBBLES 'N BITS OUTTA ME!

PUGS! DON'T SPEAK TO THE WISE DOG LIKE THAT.

It's an HONOR to See YOU AGAIN, SIR.

IT'S AN HONOR TO BE HERE, JACK.

YOU'RE HERE ABOUT THOSE cats, aren't YOU, SIR?

THEY ARE MORE THAN JUST CATS. THEY ARE FAMILIARS.

DEMONIC SERVANTS TO WITCHES, HERE ON BUSINESS AS BLACK AS THEIR FUR.

w-witches?

YEAH, An' DEMON cats. AN' LATER, we'll HAVE WEREWOLVES!

COME. Let Me SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

y'mean them's witches?

ONLY SCARY THING ABOUT them is their MAKEUP!

TAKE A GOOD WHIFF.

they SMELL WRONG.

Like the CATS.

THEY ARE MEMBERS OF AN ANCIENT SECT, WORSHIPERS OF **SEKHMET**, GODDESS OF DESTRUCTION AND WAR.

URBAN GODDESS

AT MIDNIGHT TOMORROW, ALL WILL BE IN ALIGNMENT FOR THEM TO SUMMON SEKHMET AND GAIN HER POWER.

THEN WHY AIN'T THE **HUMANS** DOIN' ANYTHING?

HARD TO TELL. THEY MAY BE UNDER SOME MILD ENCHANTMENT. OR SIMPLY UNAWARE.

THIS POSES A THREAT TO **ALL** WHO LIVE, ON TWO LEGS OR FOUR.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

IF WE CAPTURE A FAMILIAR, AND SUBSTITUTE AN **ORDINARY** BLACK CAT...

...WE CAN DISRUPT THE RITUAL.

WHY BOTHER SENDIN' A SUB?

WE NEED THEM TO FINISH THE RITUAL. THERE ARE... **CONSEQUENCES** FOR THOSE WHO CAST FAULTY SPELLS.

MAKES SENSE, I GUESS.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

ONLY WE AIN'T GOT A BLACK CAT.

WE'LL MAKE DO WITH WHAT WE HAVE.

AWNO! NOT WITH THIS CAT, YOU WON'T!

SHADDUCAT! YOU'RE ONNA HEL' USH SHAVE DA WORL'!

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS.

HOLD STILL.

HERE WE GO!

INSTANT BLACK CAT!

?

BLEAGH! ICK. THIS SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A DOG.

UNLESS IT WAS REX.

WITH THE ORPHAN TRANSFORMED, OUR HEROES COULD MOVE ON TO THE SECOND PHASE OF THEIR PLAN.

YIKES! DOESN'T THAT IDIOT KNOW WE'RE TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD?

Heel p...

heelp.

GRIMALDI?
IS tHAt YOU?

ARe YOU
ALL
RIGHT?

COFF!
DOGS.
DOGS?
WHAt ABOUt tHeM?
they're
right
behiND
YOU.

MAKe tHiS
EASY ON
YOURSELF,
KITTeN...

DOGPiLe ON
tHe WitCH
CAT!!
OW!
WHiTey!
SORRY
ACe!
FFFT
ROWW
ARGHF
ROWF
FFT
EFT

YOU MONGRELS WILL PAY FOR THIS. MY MISTRESS WILL BURY YOU ALL.

ACE
CAN the HALLOWEEN Act, Sister. US DOGS DON't SCARE EASY.
IF ANYTHING KILLS US, IT'LL Be tHeSE StinKY HeRBS, PEe-YOO!

MiMICKiNG tHe COVEN'S foUL ScENt is tHE ONLY WAY We'D eVER Get NEAR tHeM.
OKAY, Rex, YOU'Re Next.
SORRY, GUYS...

I HeLPeD WiTH tHe Cat, BUt I'm NOt GOiNG NeaR aNY WitCHes.
I'LL WATCH tHE CAPTIVE.
AW, HeLL, Rex! Not AGaiN!

LeAVe HiM Be. WE aLL HAVe OUR PART to PLay.
pure bred PiSSbag ...
TAKe a GOOD LOOK at YOUR FRiENDS, DOG. YOU'LL NeVeR SEe tHeM aGAiN.

AND ONE MORE THING. KEEP YOUR TAIL DOWN OR THEY'LL KNOW YOU'RE NOT A GIRL.

ALL I WANNA KNOW IS, HOW DO YOU GET ME OUTTA THERE WHEN IT ALL GOES DOWN?

I DON'T KNOW.

WHAT? FORGET THIS! I'M OUTTA HERE!

ACE. WOULD YOU HELP ME A MOMENT?

YEEEDOW

DYMPHNA! YOU BAD KITTY! YOU ALMOST RUINED EVERYTHING!

UH, S-SORRY. DID I MISS THE SACRIFICE?

DYMPHNA? YOUR VOICE--

HUH?

HACK OH- HACK.

HAIRBALLS.

NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY ALL HERE, WE CAN PROCEED WITH THE INVOCATION.

SISTERS! ENTER THE CIRCLE!

BELOVED SEKHMET--

GREAT ONE OF MAGIC--

MOTHER OF THE NETJERU.

GIVER OF ECSTASIES.

SATISFIER OF DESIRES!

THE ORPHAN COULD BARELY WATCH THE VILE CEREMONY THAT FOLLOWED, A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS BLUR OF BLOOD, AWKWARD DANCING, AND GIBBERISH.

KRRAAAAK

I SUMMON THEE, GLORIOUS SEKHMET!

ARISE!

DELIVER US OUR DESTINY! LET US RESHAPE THE WORLD IN YOUR MOST HOLY NAME!

OH YOU LYING DOGGY SONS OF--

CRAP! THE SPELL WORKED!

DON'T BE SO SURE.

OOOH... WHITEY THREW UP.

Look NOW AND DESPAIR! SEKHMET IS UPON YOU.

MY QUEEN! I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND-

IGNORANT WRETCH!

ONE OF YOUR ORDER LACKS DEVOTION — SO ALL MUST SUFFER!

OH GOD! We're ALL GOING to DIE! ALL OF US!

SHUT UP, CYNTHIA! She can't touch US WHILE We're IN the CIRCLE OF POWER!

Not to OBEY NOR PROFFER HER GIFTS--

-But to PUNISH the UNWORTHY!

WHAT CIRCLE OF POWER? HAVE YOU NOT EYES?

JESUS CHRIST! WHOSE STUPID FAMILIAR IS THAT?

CLOSE THE CIRCLE!

NOW, MY WAYWARD CHILDREN! THOU SHALT COME TO THE HOUSE OF RA!

THERE I SHALL TEACH YOU TO PROPERLY WORSHIP SEKHMET, THE DEVOURING ONE WHO REDUCETH ALL TO SILENCE!

WHOA! THEM'S CONSEQUENCES!

Y-YEAH! AN' THE ORPHAN'S RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT!

HEY, LADY! I'M NOT WITH THEM! I DON'T WANNA GO TO YOUR STUPID HOUSE OF RA!

AAAAH!

SNAP

REX?

MY HERO!

MAYBE **NOT**, CAT!

AS REX SAW HIS LIFE FLASH BEFORE HIS EYES, AND THE ORPHAN RELIVED HIS FIRST THREE--

--NEITHER OF THEM REALIZED THAT THE CAVALRY HAD ARRIVED.

THAT'S IT EVERYONE! JUST--A... LITTLE LONGER

HOLD ON REX! WE GOT YOU!

KRAK

THEY LIMPED HOME, EXHAUSTED BUT HAPPY. THE ORPHAN WAS A HERO, AND REX HAD REDEEMED HIMSELF.

THEY KNEW THEY HAD DONE A VERY GOOD THING, AND THAT ALL WAS WELL.

THEY WERE WRONG, OF COURSE.

VENGEANCE WILL BE MINE

BUT THAT'S A TALE FOR ANOTHER TIME.

THE END

The Dark Horse

BOOK OF THE DEAD

The Dark Horse Book of

The Dead

Nine Cautionary Tales of the Risen and Hungry Dead—told in Words and Pictures; including Famously Dead Author and Patriarch of Terrifying Adventure, Robert E. Howard.

FOLKS SAID THESE WOODS ARE HAUNTED.

BUT EVEN *THOSE* FOLKS ARE LONG DEAD NOW.

STILL THE WOODS WATCH...AND WAIT.

THEY WAIT FOR ME.

THE HUNGRY GHOSTS

JEBEDIAH KYLE!

KELLEY JONES 04

WE WILL TEAR BITTER FLESH FROM BONE.

WE WILL EAT IT BEFORE YOUR STILL STARING EYES.

GIT AWAY, DAMN YOU!

BOOM

WE ARE DEAD AND WE ARE DAMNED.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

AND WE ARE HUNGRY.

NO! NOOO!

WE ARE HUNGRY FOR YOU, JEBEDIAH KYLE.

THE DEAD DON'T TOLERATE THE LIVIN' ON THIS GROUND.

MANY YEARS THEY'VE WALKED THESE WOODS, COLD AND VENGEFUL, ANGRY FOR THEIR UNMARKED GRAVES.

NO MISTAKE, THE WOODS *ARE* HAUNTED.

BUT THEY'RE MY HOME.

OVER HERE!

LIVIN' FOLKS?

THIS IS THE PLACE.

MY GRANDFATHER USED TO HUNT UP HERE. HE SAID PEOPLE WERE *AFRAID* OF THE WOODS. ANYWAY, NOW *NO ONE* COMES HERE, NOT EVEN THE RANGERS. IT'S PERFECT--*TOTALLY* UNPROTECTED.

THE TAKE ON FURS *ALONE* WILL PAY OFF THE START-UP COSTS BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, AND KEEP US FLUSH FOR THE YEAR.

NOTHING OUT HERE BUT *MONEY* TO MAKE.

YOU HEAR THAT?

JUST A DEER PROBABLY-- TOMORROW, IT'S OURS.

HAH HA!

PRAISE THE LORD. THEY ARE REAL HUMAN FOLK...

HE SURE DOES PROVIDE.

BOOM

FOR WELL OVER A HUNDRED YEAR I'VE BEEN HUNTIN' FOLKS THROUGH THESE WOODS, CARVIN' OFF THE BITS I NEED.

NEW FLESH KEEPS ME UP AND MOVIN', 'STEAD OF DEAD AN' BURIED.

FRESH BLOOD'LL SURE PUT A HOP IN MY STEP.

MONSTER!

THAT BORROWED FLESH WILL *FALL*, JEBEDIAH KYLE--WHEN YOU FINALLY DIE, IT'LL BE AN *AWFUL RECKONING* YOU FACE.

DOESN'T MATTER IF *YOUR* FLESH FAILS ME, THERE'S ALWAYS MORE. I'LL JUST KEEP ADDING TO YER NUMBER--BUT I AIN'T *NEVER* GONNA *DIE!*

THE END

The Ghoul *or* Reflections On Death *and* The Poetry Of Worms

LONDON, 1992.

ALAS, POOR GHOST.

PITY ME NOT, BUT LEND THY SERIOUS HEARING TO WHAT I SHALL UNFOLD.

SPEAK. I AM BOUND TO HEAR.

SO ART THOU TO REVENGE, WHEN THOU SHALT HEAR.

WHAT?

I AM THY FATHER'S SPIRIT.

DOOMED FOR A CERTAIN TERM TO WALK THE NIGHT, AND FOR THE DAY CONFINED TO FAST IN FIRES, TILL THE FOUL CRIMES DONE IN MY DAYS OF NATURE ARE BURNT AND PURGED AWAY. BUT THAT I AM FORBID TO TELL THE SECRETS OF MY PRISON-HOUSE...

I COULD A TALE UNFOLD.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

YES?

MRS. STOKES, I'M PAULINE RASKIN FROM THE *B.P.R.D.* MY OFFICE CALLED YESTERDAY.

BUREAU FOR...

315

PARANORMAL RESEARCH AND DEFENSE, MA'AM.

OH YES.

COME IN, DEAR.

MA'AM, IS YOUR HUSBAND AT HOME?

I'M AFRAID EDWARD'S WORKING LATE THIS EVENING. IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME BACK ANOTHER TIME--

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MRS. STOKES, I CAME TO SEE *YOU*. I'D LIKE YOU TO LOOK AT SOME PHOTOS TAKEN BY A SECURITY CAMERA IN FOX HILL CEMETERY LAST TUESDAY NIGHT.

EXCUSE ME?

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THE MAN IN THAT PHOTOGRAPH?

YES.

THAT'S EDWARD. BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

I CANNOT *IMAGINE* WHAT HE'S DOING.

IS IT A PICNIC?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

"MA'AM, ARE YOU *SURE* YOUR HUSBAND IS WORKING TONIGHT?"

"MEN SHIVER, WHEN THOU'RT NAMED. NATURE APPALL'D SHAKES OFF HER WONTED FIRMNESS. AH, HOW DARK THY LONG-EXTENDED REALMS, AND RUEFUL WASTES, WHERE NAUGHT BUT SILENCE REIGNS AND NIGHT, DARK NIGHT."

HAMMERSMITH CEMETERY.

"OF NAMES ONCE FAMED, NOW DUBIOUS OR FORGOT..."

"AND BURIED 'MIDST THE WRECK OF THINGS THAT WERE..."

"THERE LIE INTERR'D THE MORE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD."

VERY PRETTY, MISTER STOKES.

!

"DOORS CREAK..."

NOW ARE YOU GONNA COME ALONG QUIET?

OR DO I GET TO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF YOU?

"...AND WINDOWS CLAP..."

THUD

WHERE YOU GOING, ED?

WE KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING. WE KNOW THAT WAS YOU LAST YEAR IN LIVERPOOL. AND BEFORE THAT BRADFORD, AND BEFORE *THAT* SHEFFIELD.

AHHHH!

"AND NIGHT'S FOUL BIRD ROOK'D IN THE SPIRE SCREAMS LOUD..."

MUNICH IN '59. PRAGUE IN '36. JUST HOW OLD *ARE* YOU, ED? A HUNDRED? TWO HUNDRED YEARS?

YOU LOOK PRETTY DAMN GOOD FOR YOUR AGE...

MUST BE YOUR DIET!

"THE GRAVE, DREAD THING..."

YOU SICK PIECE OF CRAP.

"THE GRAVE."

YOU'RE WORSE THAN A CANNIBAL, AND THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING.

"THERE. LONESOME LISTEN TO THE SACRED SOUNDS WHICH, AS THEY LENGTHEN THRO' THE GOTHIC VAULTS, IN HOLLOW MURMURS REACH MY RAVISH'D EAR."

"DIVINE MELPOMENE, SWEET PITY'S NURSE, QUEEN OF THE STATELY STEP, AND FLOWING PALL. NOW LET MONIMIA MOURN WITH STREAMING EYES... INCESTUOUS AND POLLUTED LOVE."

"NOW LET SOFT JULIET IN THE GAPING TOMB PRINT THE LAST KISS..."

"...ON HER TRUE ROMEO'S LIPS."

BOOM

QUIT THAT!

"PASS AND REPASS, HUSHED AS THE FOOT OF NIGHT. AGAIN! THE SCREECH-OWL SHRIEKS--"

BOOM

"UNGRACIOUS SOUND! I'LL HEAR NO MORE--"

BOOM

YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO START FIGHTING BACK, ED.

I'VE NEVER YET BROUGHT ONE OF YOU GUYS IN ALIVE.

"IT MAKES ONE'S BLOOD RUN CHILL."

"ROARS NOT THE RUSHING WIND. THE SONS OF MEN AND EVERY BEAST IN MUTE OBLIVION LIE."

"ALL NATURE'S HUSH'D SILENCE AND IN SLEEP."

"NO BEING WAKES BUT ME."

BOOM

"TILL STEALING SLEEP..."

"MY DROOPING TEMPLES BATHE IN OPIATE DEWS... MY SENSES LEAD THRO' FLOW'RY PATHS...OF JOY."

HAMLET...

"NOW, TAME AND HUMBLE, LIKE A CHILD THAT'S WHIPP'D, SHAKES HANDS WITH DUST."

WHERE'S POLONIUS?

AT SUPPER.

AT SUPPER? WHERE?

NOT WHERE HE EATS, BUT WHERE HE IS EATEN. A CERTAIN CONVOCATION OF POLITIC WORMS ARE E'EN AT HIM.

"YOUR WORM IS YOUR ONLY EMPEROR FOR DIET. WE FAT ALL CREATURES ELSE TO FAT US..."

AND WE FAT OURSELVES FOR MAGGOTS.

YOUR FAT KING AND YOUR LEAN BEGGAR IS BUT VARIABLE SERVICE --TWO DISHES, BUT TO ONE TABLE.

THAT'S THE END.

ALAS, ALAS!

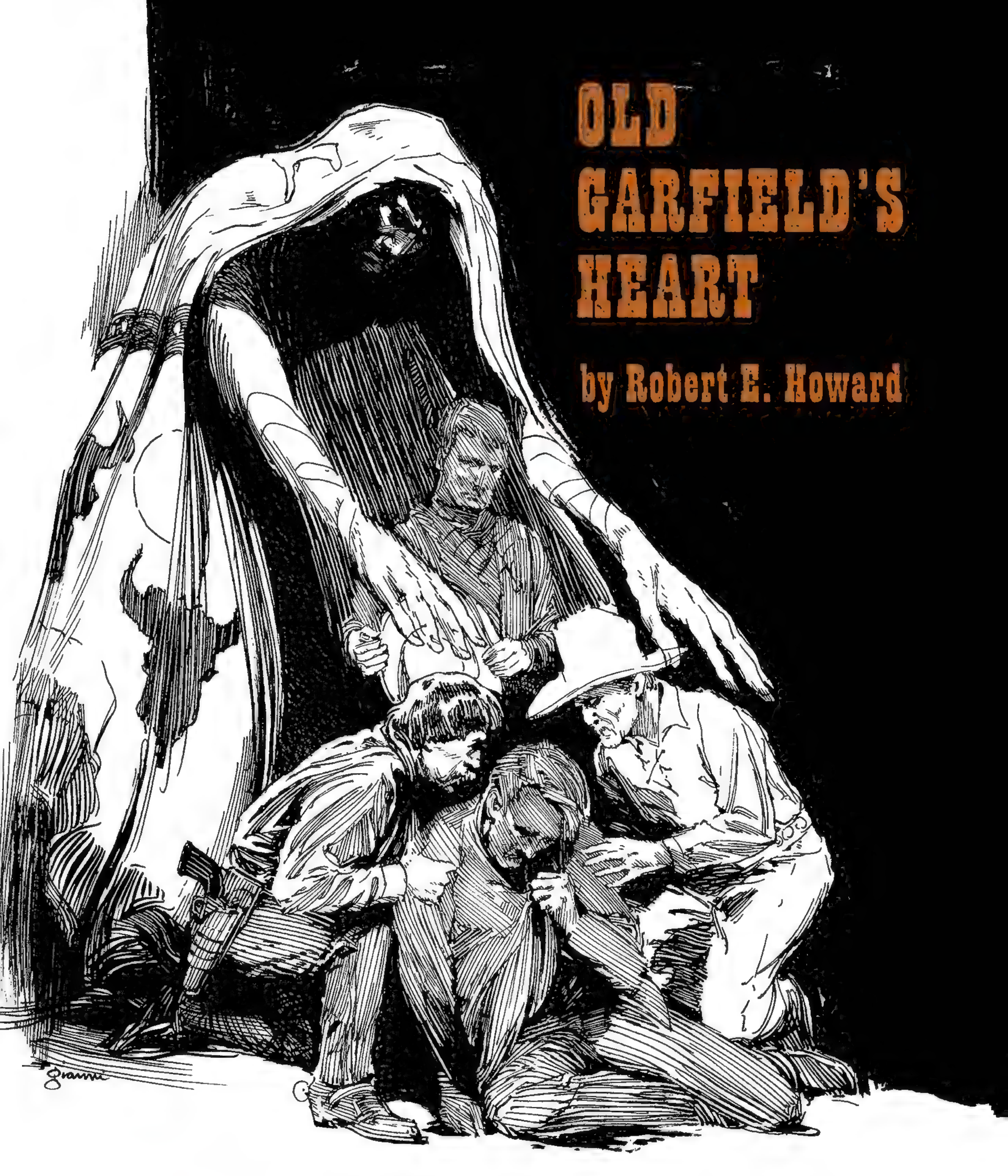
A MAN MAY FISH WITH THE WORM THAT HATH EAT OF A KING, AND EAT OF THE FISH THAT HATH FED OF THAT WORM.

WHAT DOST THOU MEAN?

"NOTHING."

BUT TO SHOW YOU HOW A KING MAY GO A PROGRESS THROUGH THE GUTS OF A BEGGAR.
WHERE IS POLONIUS?
IN HEAVEN. SEND THITHER TO SEE.
IF YOUR MESSENGER FIND HIM NOT THERE, SEEK HIM IN THE OTHER PLACE YOURSELF.

The heartfelt rantings of the ghoul are taken from two poems—*The Pleasures of Melancholy* (Thomas Warton the younger, 1728–1746) and *The Grave* (Robert Blair, 1699–1746). The television program is, apparently, a puppet theater production of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.



ILLUSTRATIONS *by* GARY GIANNI

I was sitting on the porch when my grandfather hobbled out and sank down on his favorite chair with the cushioned seat, and began to stuff tobacco in his old corncob pipe.

"I thought you'd be goin' to the dance," he said.

"I'm waiting for Doc Blaine," I answered. "I'm going over to old man Garfield's with him."

My grandfather sucked at his pipe awhile before he spoke again.

"Old Jim purty bad off?"

"Doc says he hasn't a chance."

"Who's takin' care of him?"

"Joe Braxton—against Garfield's wishes. But somebody had to stay with him."

My grandfather sucked his pipe noisily, and watched the heat lightning playing away off up in the hills; then he said: "You think old Jim's the biggest liar in this county, don't you?"

"He tells some pretty tall tales," I admitted. "Some of the things he claimed he took part in, must have happened before he was born."

"I came from Tennessee to Texas in 1870," my grandfather said abruptly. "I saw this town of Lost Knob grow up from nothin'. There wasn't even a log-hut store here when I came. But old Jim Garfield was here, livin' in the same place he lives now, only then it was a log cabin. He didn't look a day older now than he did the first time I saw him."

"You never mentioned that before," I said in some surprise.

"I knew you'd put it down to an old man's maunderin's," he answered. "Old Jim was the first white man to settle in this country. He built his cabin a good fifty miles west of the frontier. God knows how he done it, for these hills swarmed with Comanches then.

"I remember the first time I ever saw him. Even then everybody called him 'old Jim.'

"I remember him tellin' me the same tales he's told you—how he was at the battle of San Jacinto when he was a youngster, and how he'd rode with Ewen Cameron and Jack Hayes. Only I believe him, and you don't."

"That was so long ago—" I protested.

"The last Indian raid through this country was in 1874," said my grandfather, engrossed in his own reminiscences. "I was in on that fight, and so was old Jim. I saw him knock old Yellow Tail off his mustang at seven hundred yards with a buffalo rifle.

"But before that I was with him in a fight up near the head of Locust Creek. A band of Comanches came down Mesquital, lootin' and burnin', rode through the hills and started back up Locust Creek, and a scout of us were hot on their heels. We ran on to them just at sundown in a mesquite flat. We killed seven of them, and the rest skinned out through the brush on foot. But three of our boys were killed, and Jim Garfield got a thrust in the breast with a lance.

"It was an awful wound. He lay like a dead man, and it seemed sure nobody could live after a wound like that. But an old Indian came out of the brush, and when we aimed our guns at him, he made the peace sign and spoke to us in Spanish. I don't know why the boys didn't shoot him in his tracks, because our blood was heated with the fightin' and killin', but

somethin' about him made us hold our fire. He said he wasn't a Comanche, but was an old friend of Garfield's, and wanted to help him. He asked us to carry Jim into a clump of mesquite, and leave him alone with him, and to this day I don't know why we did, but we did. It was an awful time—the wounded moanin' and callin' for water, the starin' corpses strewn about the camp, night comin' on, and no way of knowin' that the Indians wouldn't return when dark fell.

"We made camp right there, because the horses were fagged out, and we watched all night, but the Comanches didn't come back. I don't know what went on out in the mesquite where Jim Garfield's body lay, because I never saw that strange Indian again, but durin' the night I kept hearin' a weird moanin' that wasn't made by the dyin' men, and an owl hooted from midnight till dawn.

"And at sunrise Jim Garfield came walkin' out of the mesquite, pale and haggard, but alive, and already the wound in his breast had closed and begun to heal. And since then he's never mentioned that wound, nor that fight, nor the strange Indian who came and went so mysteriously. And he hasn't aged a bit; he looks now just like he did then—a man of about fifty."

In the silence that followed, a car began to purr down the road, and twin shafts of light cut through the dusk.

"That's Doc Blaine," I said. "When I come back I'll tell you how Garfield is."

Doc Blaine was prompt with his predictions as we drove the three miles of post oak-covered hills that lay between Lost Knob and the Garfield farm.

"I'll be surprised to find him alive," he said, "smashed up like he is. A man his age ought to have more sense than to try to break a young horse."

"He doesn't look so old," I remarked.

"I'll be fifty, my next birthday," answered Doc Blaine. "I've known him all my life, and he must have been at least fifty the first time I ever saw him. His looks are deceiving."

Old Garfield's dwelling place was reminiscent of the past. The boards of the low, squat house had never known paint. Orchard fence and corrals were built of rails.

Old Jim lay on his rude bed, tended crudely but efficiently by the man Doc Blaine had hired over the old man's protests. As I looked at him, I was impressed anew by his evident vitality. His frame was stooped but unwithered, his limbs rounded out with springy muscles. In his corded neck and in his face, drawn though it was with suffering, was apparent an innate virility. His eyes, though partly glazed with pain, burned with the same unquenchable element.

"He's been ravin'," said Joe Braxton stolidly.

"First white man in this country," muttered old Jim, becoming intelligible. "Hills no white man ever set foot in before. Gettin' too old. Have to settle down. Can't move on like I used to. Settle down here. Good country before it filled up with cow-men and squatters. Wish Ewen Cameron could see this country. The Mexicans shot him. Damn 'em!"

Doc Blaine shook his head. "He's all smashed up inside. He won't live till daylight."

Garfield unexpectedly lifted his head and looked at us with clear eyes.

"Wrong, Doc," he wheezed, his breath whistling with pain. "I'll live. What's broken bones and twisted guts? Nothin'! It's the heart that counts. Long as the heart keeps pumpin', a man can't die. My heart's sound. Listen to it! Feel of it!"

He groped painfully for Doc Blaine's wrist, dragged his hand to his bosom and held it there, staring up into the doctor's face with avid intensity.

"Regular dynamo, ain't it?" he gasped. "Stronger'n a gasoline engine!"

Blaine beckoned me. "Lay your hand here," he said, placing my hand on the old man's bare breast. "He does have a remarkable heart action."

I noted, in the light of the coal-oil lamp, a great livid scar as might be made by a flint-headed spear. I laid my hand directly on this scar, and an exclamation escaped my lips.

Under my hand old Jim Garfield's heart pulsed, but its throb was like no other heart action I have ever observed. Its power was astounding; his ribs vibrated to its steady throb. It felt more like the vibrating of a dynamo than the action of a human organ. I could feel its amazing vitality radiating from

his breast, stealing up into my hand and up my arm, until my own heart seemed to speed up in response.

"I can't die," old Jim gasped. "Not so long as my heart's in my breast. Only a bullet through the brain can kill me. And even then I wouldn't be rightly dead, as long as my heart beats in my breast. Yet it ain't rightly mine, either. It belongs to Ghost Man, the Lipan chief. It was the heart of a god the Lipans worshipped before the Comanches drove 'em out of their native hills.

"I knew Ghost Man down on the Rio Grande, when I was with Ewen Cameron. I saved his life from the Mexicans once. He tied the string of ghost wampum between him and me—the wampum no man but me and him can see or feel. He came when he knowed I needed him, in that fight up on the headwaters of Locust Creek, when I got this scar.

"I was dead as a man can be. My heart was sliced in two, like the heart of a butchered beef steer.

"All night Ghost Man did magic, callin' my ghost back from spirit-land. I remember that flight, a little. It was dark, and gray-like, and I drifted through gray mists and heard the dead wailin' past me in the mist. But Ghost Man brought me back.

"He took out what was left of my mortal heart, and put the heart of the god in my bosom. But it's his, and when I'm through with it, he'll come for it. It's kept me alive and strong for the lifetime of a man. Age can't touch me. What do I care if these fools around here call me an old liar? What I know, I know. But hark'ee!"

His fingers became claws, clamping fiercely on Doc Blaine's wrist. His old eyes, old yet strangely young, burned fierce as those of an eagle under his bushy brows.

"If by some mischance I *should* die, now or later, promise me this! Cut into my bosom and take out the heart Ghost Man lent me so long ago! It's his. And as long as it beats in my body, my spirit'll be tied to that body, though my head be crushed like an egg underfoot! A livin' thing in a rottin' body! Promise!"

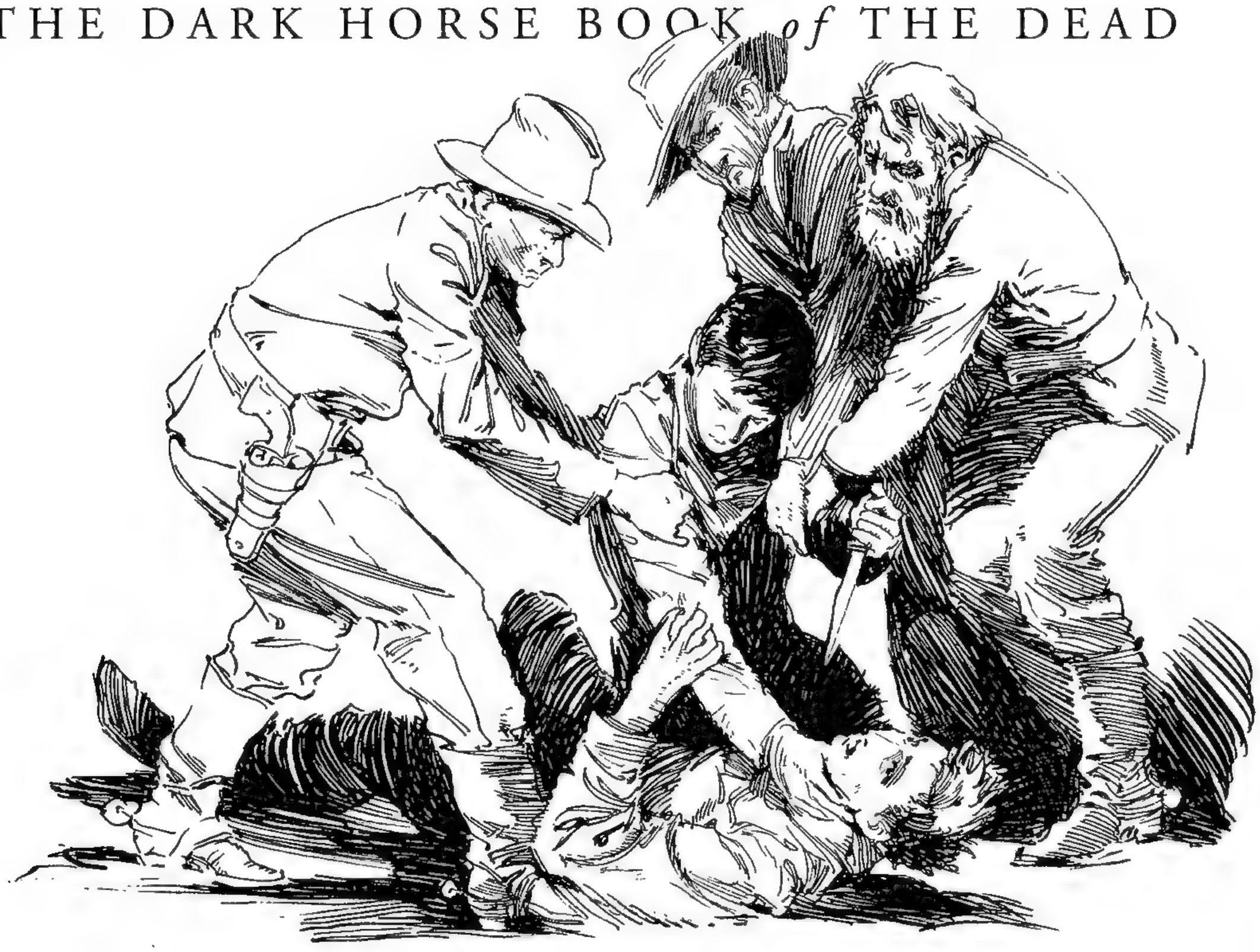
"All right, I promise," replied Doc Blaine, to humor him, and old Jim Garfield sank back with a whistling sigh of relief.

He did not die that night, nor the next, nor the next. I well remember the next day, because it was that day that I had the fight with Jack Kirby.

People will take a good deal from a bully, rather than to spill blood. Because nobody had gone to the trouble of killing him, Kirby thought the whole countryside was afraid of him.

He had bought a steer from my father, and when my father went to collect for it, Kirby told him that he had paid the money to me—which was a lie. I went looking for Kirby, and came upon him in a bootleg joint, boasting of his toughness, and telling the crowd that he was going to beat me up and

GIANNI



make me say that he had paid me the money, and that I had stuck it into my own pocket. When I heard him say that, I saw red, and ran in on him with a stockman's knife, and cut him across the face, and in the neck, side, breast and belly, and the only thing that saved his life was the fact that the crowd pulled me off.

There was a preliminary hearing, and I was indicted on a charge of assault, and my trial was set for the following term of court. Kirby was as tough-fibered as a post-oak, country bully ought to be, and he recovered, swearing vengeance, for he was vain of his looks, though God knows why, and I had permanently impaired them.

And while Jack Kirby was recovering, old man Garfield recovered, too, to the amazement of everybody, especially Doc Blaine.

I well remember the night Doc Blaine took me again out to old Jim Garfield's farm. I was in Shifty Corlan's joint, trying to drink enough of the slop he called beer to get a kick out of it, when Doc Blaine came in and persuaded me to go with him.

As we drove along the winding old road in Doc's car, I asked: "Why are you insistent that I go with you this particular night? This isn't a professional call, is it?"

"No," he said. "You couldn't kill old Jim with a post-oak maul. He's completely recovered from injuries that ought to have killed an ox. To tell you the truth, Jack Kirby is in Lost Knob, swearing he'll shoot you on sight."

"Well, for God's sake!" I exclaimed angrily. "Now everybody'll think I left town because I was afraid of him. Turn around and take me back, damn it!"

"Be reasonable," said Doc. "Everybody knows you're not afraid of Kirby. Nobody's afraid of him now. His bluff's broken, and that's why he's so wild against you. But you can't afford to have any more trouble with him now, and your trial only a short time off."

I laughed and said: "Well, if he's looking for me hard enough, he can find me as easily at old Garfield's as in town, because Shifty Corlan heard you say where we were going. And Shifty's hated me ever since I skinned him in that horse swap last fall. He'll tell Kirby where I went."

"I never thought of that," said Doc Blaine, worried.

"Hell, forget it," I advised. "Kirby hasn't got guts enough to do anything but blow."

But I was mistaken. Puncture a bully's vanity and you touch his one vital spot.

Old Jim had not gone to bed when we got there. He was sitting in the room opening on to his sagging porch, the room which was at once living room and bedroom, smoking his old cob pipe and trying to read a newspaper by the light of his coal-oil lamp. All the windows and doors were wide open for the coolness, and the insects which swarmed in and fluttered around the lamp didn't seem to bother him.

We sat down and discussed the weather—which isn't so inane as one might suppose, in a country where a man's livelihood depends on sun and rain, and is at the mercy of wind and drouth. The talk drifted into the other kindred channels, and after some time, Doc Blaine bluntly spoke of something that hung in his mind.

"Jim," he said, "that night I thought you were dying, you babbled a lot of stuff about your heart, and an Indian who lent you his. How much of that was delirium?"

"None, Doc," said Garfield, pulling at his pipe. "It was gospel truth. Ghost Man, the Lipan priest of the Gods of Night, replaced my dead, torn heart with one from somethin' he worshipped. I ain't sure myself just what that somethin' is—somethin' from a way back and a long way off, he said. But bein' a god, it can do without a heart for a while. But when I die—if I ever get my head smashed so my consciousness is destroyed—the heart must be given back to Ghost Man."

"You mean you were in earnest about the cutting out your heart?" demanded Doc Blaine.

"It has to be," answered old Garfield. "A livin' thing in a dead thing is opposed to nat'er. That's what Ghost Man said."

"Who the devil was Ghost Man?"

"I told you. A witch-doctor of the Lipans, who dwelt in this country before the Comanches came down from the Staked Plains and drove 'em south across the Rio Grande. I was a friend to 'em. I reckon Ghost Man is the only one left alive."

"Alive? Now?"

"I dunno," confessed old Jim. "I dunno whether he's alive or dead. I dunno whether he was alive when he came to me after the fight on Locust Creek, or even if he was alive when I knowed him in the southern country. Alive as we understand life, I mean."

"What balderdash is this?" demanded Doc Blaine uneasily, and I felt a slight stirring in my hair. Outside was stillness, and the stars, and the black shadows of the post-oak woods. The lamp cast old Garfield's shadow grotesquely on the wall, so that it did not at all resemble that of a human, and his words were strange as words heard in a nightmare.

"I knowed you wouldn't understand," said old Jim. "I don't understand myself, and I ain't got the words to explain them things I feel and know without understandin'. The Lipans were kin to the Apaches, and the Apaches learnt curious things from the Pueblos. Ghost Man *was*. That's all I can say—alive or dead, I don't know, but he *was*. What's more, he *is*."

"Is it you or me that's crazy?" asked Doc Blaine.

"Well," said old Jim, "I'll tell you this much—Ghost Man knew Coronado."

"Crazy as a loon!" murmured Doc Blaine. Then he lifted his head. "What's that?"

"Horse turning in from the road," I said. "Sounds like it stopped."

I stepped to the door, like a fool, and stood etched in the light behind me. I got a glimpse of a shadowy bulk I knew to be a man on a horse; then Doc Blaine yelled: "Look out!" and threw himself against me, knocking us both sprawling. At the same instant I heard the smashing report of a rifle, and old Garfield grunted and fell heavily.

"Jack Kirby!" screamed Doc Blaine. "He's killed Jim!"

I scrambled up, hearing the clatter of retreating hoofs, snatched old Jim's shotgun from the wall, rushed recklessly out on to the sagging porch and let go both barrels at the fleeing shape, dim in the starlight. The charge was too light to kill at that range, but the bird-shot stung the horse and maddened him. He swerved, crashed

headlong through a rail fence and charged across the orchard, and a peach tree limb knocked his rider out of the saddle. He never moved after he hit the ground. I ran out there and looked down at him. It was Jack Kirby, right enough, and his neck was broken like a rotten branch.

I let him lie, and ran back to the house. Doc Blaine had stretched old Garfield out on a bench he'd dragged in from the porch, and Doc's face was whiter than I'd ever seen it. Old Jim was a ghastly sight; he had been shot with an old-fashioned .45-70, and at that range the heavy ball had literally torn off the top of his head. His features were masked with blood and brains. He had been directly behind me, poor old devil, and he had stopped the slug meant for me.

Doc Blaine was trembling, though he was anything but a stranger to such sights.

"Would you pronounce him dead?" he asked.

"That's for you to say," I answered. "But even a fool could tell that he's dead."

"He *is* dead," said Doc Blaine in a strained unnatural voice. "Rigor mortis is already setting in. But feel his heart!"

I did, and cried out. The flesh was already cold and clammy; but beneath it that mysterious heart still hammered steadily away, like a dynamo in a deserted house. No blood coursed through those veins; yet the heart pounded, pounded, pounded, like the pulse of Eternity.

"A living thing in a dead thing," whispered Doc Blaine, cold sweat on his face. "This is opposed to nature. I am going to keep the promise I made him. I'll assume full responsibility. This is too monstrous to ignore."

Our implements were a butcher-knife and a hack-saw. Outside only the still stars looked down on the black post-oak shadows and the dead man that lay in the orchard. Inside, the oil lamp flickered, making strange shadows move and shiver and cringe in the corners, and glistened on the blood on the floor, and the red-dabbled figure on the bench. The only sound inside was the crunch of the saw-edge in bone; outside an owl began to hoot weirdly.

Doc Blaine thrust a red-stained hand into the aperture he had made, and drew out a red, pulsing object that caught the lamplight. With a choked cry he recoiled, and the thing slipped from his fingers and fell on the table. And I, too, cried out involuntarily. For it did not fall with a soft meaty thud, as a piece of flesh should fall. It *thumped* hard on the table.

Impelled by an irresistible urge, I bent and gingerly picked up old Garfield's heart. The feel of it was brittle, unyielding, like steel or stone, but smoother than either. In size and shape it was the duplicate of a human heart, but it was slick and smooth, and its crimson surface reflected the lamplight like a jewel more lambent than any ruby; and in my hand it still

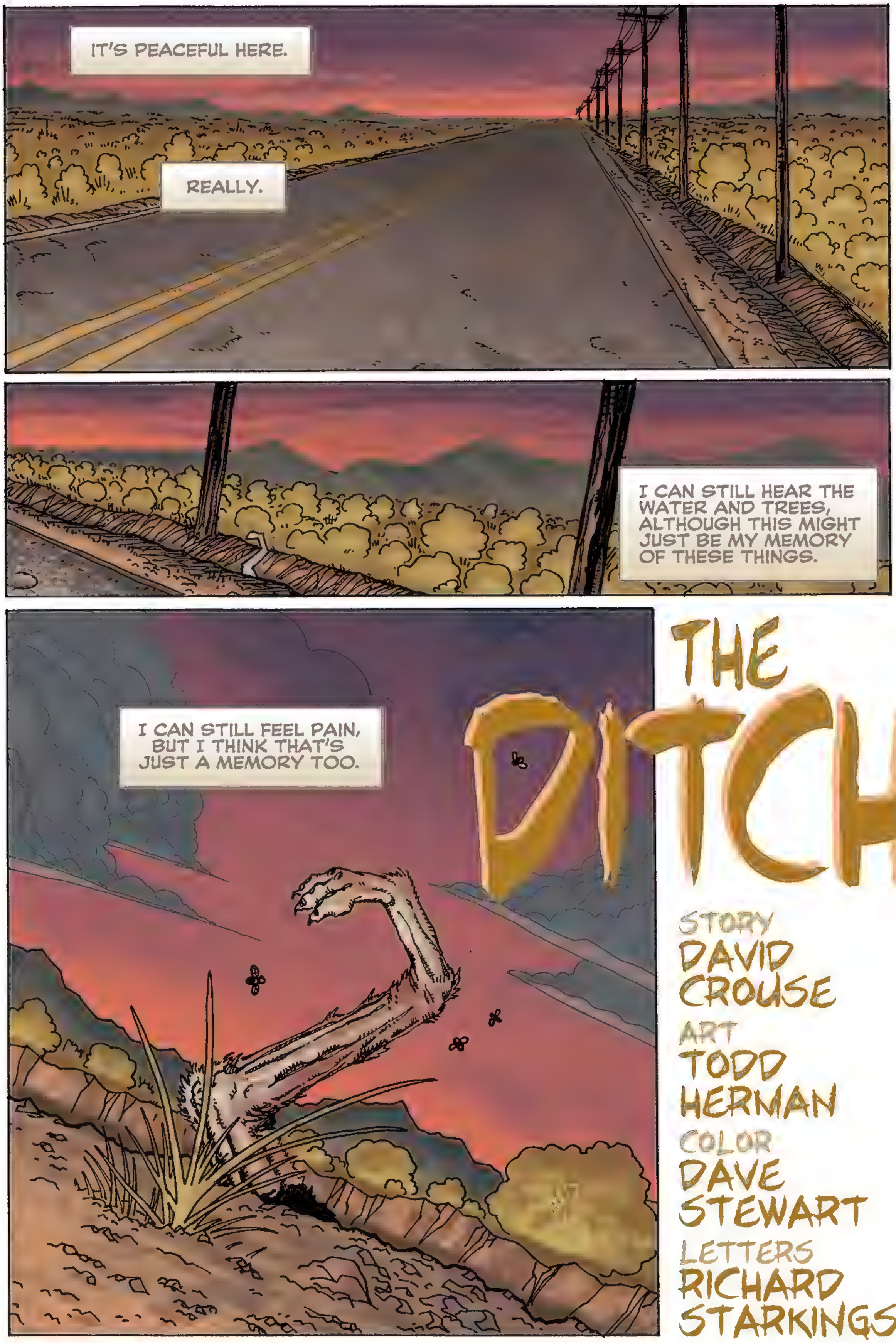
throbbed mightily, sending vibratory radiations of energy up my arm until my own heart seemed swelling and bursting in response. It was cosmic *power*, beyond my comprehension, concentrated into the likeness of a human heart.

The thought came to me that here was a dynamo of life, the nearest approach to immortality that is possible for the destructible human body, the materialization of a cosmic secret more wonderful than the fabulous fountain sought for by Ponce de Leon. My soul was drawn into that unterrestrial gleam, and I suddenly wished passionately that it hammered and thundered in my own bosom in place of my paltry heart of tissue and muscle.

Doc Blaine ejaculated incoherently. I wheeled.

The noise of his coming had been no greater than the whispering of a night wind through the corn. There in the doorway he stood, tall, dark, inscrutable—an Indian warrior, in the paint, war bonnet, breech-clout and moccasins of an elder age. His dark eyes burned like fires gleaming deep under fathomless black lakes. Silently he extended his hand, and I dropped Jim Garfield's heart into it. Then without a word he turned and stalked into the night. But when Doc Blaine and I rushed out into the yard an instant later, there was no sign of any human being. He had vanished like a phantom of the night, and only something that looked like an owl was flying, dwindling from sight, into the rising moon.

The End


IT'S PEACEFUL HERE.
REALLY.
I CAN STILL HEAR THE WATER AND TREES, ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT JUST BE MY MEMORY OF THESE THINGS.
I CAN STILL FEEL PAIN, BUT I THINK THAT'S JUST A MEMORY TOO.
THE DITCH
STORY
DAVID CROUSE
ART
TODD HERMAN
COLOR
DAVE STEWART
LETTERS
RICHARD STARKINGS

I HAVE SO MANY MEMORIES. SOME OF THEM AREN'T MY OWN.

I AM BLEEDING INTO THE WORLD.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE WISDOM.

BUT DO TRUMPETS SOUND? DO CHARIOTS CARRY YOU AWAY?

I AM BEING CARRIED AWAY.

I REMEMBER THE HEADLIGHTS. THE SMELL OF GASOLINE.

THE PAIN.

BUT I REMEMBER THE SONG ON THE RADIO TOO. THE TASTE OF MAYONNAISE ON THE DRIVER'S TONGUE. THE NUMBER ON THE SPEEDOMETER.

SEVENTY-NINE.

HE DECIDED IT WAS AN OPOSSUM.

HALF A MILE LATER HE WAS TRYING TO REMEMBER HOW TO SPELL THE WORD.

OPOSSUM. SEVEN LETTERS. ONE P. OR WAS IT TWO?

SURE THERE WERE DOGS OUT HERE, THE MAN TOLD HIM.

THEY HAD EVERYTHING OUT HERE. RABBITS. DOGS. DRUNKS. TRUCKS WERE ALWAYS KNOCKING THEM INTO HOLES.

THE SAME KIND OF SHIRT AS HIS FATHER, THE DRIVER THOUGHT.

SMELLED THE SAME TOO. OF MARLBORO REDS. ALTHOUGH MAYBE THAT WAS JUST HIS IMAGINATION.

IT HAD BEEN TWO MONTHS SINCE THEY HAD LAST TALKED.

NO ... NOT TALKED.

THEY HAD ARGUED. ABOUT ALL THE LOANS. BUT WHAT DID HIS FATHER NEED ALL THAT MONEY FOR?

HE WAS SEVENTY-TWO YEARS OLD. HE LIVED ON CANS OF OXYGEN AND TOMATO SOUP.

WHAT HAD HIS FATHER CALLED HIM?

CARELESS.

THAT FIRST NIGHT, MY LEGS DANCED ABOVE ME. ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS KICK AND TWIST AND BITE AT THE STUPID AIR.

TIME PASSED.

MY LUNGS FILLED WITH BLOOD.

HE HAD TO DRIVE BY HERE EVERYDAY ON THE WAY TO WORK.

A WOMAN STOPPED AND STARED AND DECIDED SHE WAS TOO LATE.

SOMEONE ELSE WAS THINKING OF ME, TOO.

BUT HE COULDN'T FIND ME.

I AM RIGHT HERE.

HE LISTENED TO THE ANIMALS OFF IN THE DARK.

MY SKIN TICKLED WITH SMALL THINGS.

GUILT DEMANDED HE DO SOMETHING.

SO HE HEADED TO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

WHAT HAD HIS FATHER CALLED HIM?

A BLOODSUCKER. A COWARD.

HE HAD BEEN CARELESS.

DENIALS AND APOLOGIES. INSULTS. THE DRIVER RECITED THEM IN HIS OWN HEAD, AS IF HE WERE REHEARSING SPEECHES FOR A PLAY.

HE WAS TOO AFRAID TO GO IN. BUT I COULD. I CAN GO ANYWHERE.

I AM SO CLOSE TO HIM.

HE IS SO CLOSE TO ME.

I CAN ALMOST TOUCH HIM. IT'S GOING TO BE SOON.

I WHISPER IN HIS EAR.

IT'S OKAY TO COME CLOSER.

IT HAS BEEN FOUR DAYS SINCE THE DRIVER HIT ME, THREE SINCE I DIED. I AM THINNING OUT. BLENDING IN.

THE REMEMBERING IS A KIND OF FORGETTING.

THE DRIVER TAKES THE LONG WAY AROUND.

IT'S EASIER. AND HE'S THE KIND OF PERSON WHO DOES THE EASY THING. HE KNOWS THAT NOW.

FIVE DAYS. SIX. SEVEN. THE TRAFFIC SLIDES BY.

THE DRIVERS TURN THEIR HEADS MY WAY AND WHAT DO THEY SEE?

A BROKEN TREE BRANCH. THE SHADOW OF A QUESTION MARK. A RAISED HAND.

AND THEN THEY ARE GONE.

I GO WITH THEM.

END

WHAT THE --?! WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

SLEEPING BEAUTY ARISES, AND *WITHOUT* A KISS. I *PROMISE*.

GAH! WHO THE HECK ARE *YOU?* YOU LOOK LIKE THAT *DEATH GUY!*

YOU MEAN *DEATH?*

YEAH, HIM. THE *DEATH GUY.*

KID DOESN'T MISS A TRICK.

SCHMIDT, R.

Zombie Boy

BY BOB FINGERMAN AND ROGER LANGRIDGE

YOU ATTEMPTED *SUICIDE*, LAD. YOU FAILED, BUT CAUGHT MY EYE. CALL IT A CERTAIN *JE NE SAIS QUOI*.

SUICIDE? I DON'T REMEMBER. *REALLY?*

WOULD I LIE?

SO, I GUESS YOU'RE UP SINCE I HEARD YOU TALKING.

YEAH, THIS GUY SAYS I ATTEMPTED *SUICIDE*.

WHAT GUY?

THIS CREEPY GUY IN THE HALLOWEEN GETUP.

CREEPY GUY. I... SEE.

SHE ***DOESN'T***, YOU KNOW? ***SEE***, THAT IS. ONLY ***YOU*** CAN SEE ME. ISN'T THAT A TREAT? HEH-HEH.

NOW HE'S SAYING ***ONLY I CAN SEE HIM!*** CAN'T YOU THROW HIM OUT, NURSE? HE...

GACK.

AND THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE.

UH, N-NURSE? ***NURSE?*** OH JEEZ, SHE'S...

BELLY UP, BREATHLESS, CHECKED OUT, DECEASED, DEFUNCT, DONE FOR, ERASED, EXPIRED, GONE, INERT, LATE, LIQUIDATED...

STOP ME IF I'M BEING REDUNDANT.

OH ***JEEBUS***, I DIDN'T MEAN TO... I DON'T EVEN KNOW... I MEAN IT WAS A ***HEART ATTACK***, RIGHT?

...OFFED, PERISHED, REPOSING, RUBBED OUT, SNUFFED OUT, STIFF, WASHED UP, WASTED.

NO, BUT IT ***WAS*** NATURAL CAUSES. I GAVE YOU "***THE TOUCH***," KIDDO. ***YOU*** GOT WHAT ***I*** GOT ONLY ***I*** DON'T GOT IT NO MORE.

NATURAL OR UNNATURAL, I'D BEAT CHEEKS IF I WERE YOU.

UH, TAKE THE EXTRA COUPLA SECONDS TO PUT SOME CLOTHES ON, KID.

HEY, PUNK, THIS AIN'T A TRACK MEET! HOLD IT RIGHT...

EXIT

P-TUNG

...THERE.

GACK.

OH, JEEZO, NOT AGAIN!

Y'S HOSPITAL

THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING. THEY MUST HAVE DOSED ME UP WITH SOME HEAVY-DUTY PHARMACEUTICALS.

MEOW?

HELLO, KITTY-CAT. ARE YOU A NICE, SOFT, SMOOTH, CALMING...

GACK.

...CALM, *TOO* CALM KITTY-CAT. SIGH.

LOOKS LIKE YOU ***WUVVED*** HIM TO DEATH, KID.

OH, GREAT. MY ***DELUSION*** IS BACK.

I'M NO DELUSION, SNOOKY.

MAYBE ***THAT*** PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN ***ME*** AND THAT ***NUT IN THE COWL.*** AND I THOUGHT ***I*** WAS TOO INTO ***D&D.***

I AM SO OUT OF SHAPE. ***PHEW!***

PHLUMPH

SNICKER.

WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE TO MY PRIZED **CRAPE MYRTLE** DECIDUOUS, YOU LITTLE BASTARD?

MR. MONGOPISKIAN, **HORTICULTURAL HUN OF THE 'HOOD!**

MR. M., **LET ME EXPLAIN!**

I'LL TEAR YOU **LIMB** FROM **LIMB** FOR WHAT YOU DONE...

GACK.

YOU DEFINITELY GOT THE KNACK, PEEWEE.

THAT'S PRETTY COOL, ACTUALLY. NO DISRESPECT TO THE DEAD AND ALL, BUT MR. MONGOPISKIAN WAS KIND OF A DOUCHE.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT.

WHAT AM I SAYING? IN THE LAST TEN MINUTES I'VE OFFED **THREE PEOPLE**, A **CAT** AND AN **ORNAMENTAL PRIZE-WINNING TREE**. THAT'S **HORRIBLE**. BUT KIND OF COOL. BUT MOSTLY HORRIBLE. BUT DEFINITELY KIND OF COOL. BUT...

OY GEVALT. A CONSCIENCE LOOP.

WAITAMINUTE!

GLOVES!

FRANKIE SAYS KREPLACH'S

KREPLACH UNIFORM SUPPLY OUTLET

WE ALSO HAVE ***COTTON INSPECTION GLOVES***. KEEP SENSITIVE PRODUCTS CLEAN FROM FINGERPRINTS AND SMUDGES.

UH-HUH.

THANKS, MISTER.

GACK.

RATS.

WHEN THE NURSE TOUCHED ME SHE HAD ON ***RUBBER*** GLOVES!

SAF'N KLEEN FARMACY 'N PROSTHESES

TODAY'S SPECIALS — SCHADEN-FREUDE AND COLD COMFORT

HOMELESS and RICH

WHATTAYA MEAN YOU'RE SOLD OUT?

JUST THAT, LIKE, Y'KNOW, WE'RE UH, SOLD OUT?

HARDENFAST

HARDENFAST HARDWARE NO GIRLYMEN!

BINGO! THE MOTHER LODE!

100% COTTON. NOPE.

100% NATURAL LATEX. HMM. "***DO NOT ALLOW GLOVES TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH ANIMAL BODY FAT.***"

I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF ***THAT.***

100% NEOPRENE. "...TO PREVENT DERMATITIS AND PERSPIRATION BUILDUP." ***PERFECTO!***

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS?!? I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF LOOT!

THEN YOU DON'T GET THE GLOVES, SPORT.

BUT IT'S A MATTER OF ***LIFE AND DEATH!***

ISN'T IT ***ALWAYS*** WITH YOU ***OVERDRAMATIC TEENS?*** YOU SHOULD HEAR MY ***DAUGHTER*** GO ON AND ON. "DADDY, IF I DON'T GET THAT NEW ***WHATCHAMACALLIT*** DESIGNER ***THINGUS*** I'LL ***DIE!***" "IF I DON'T GET..."

SORRY, MISTER. I ***NEED*** THESE!

OH, NO, YOU DON'...

GACK!

I DIDN'T DO IT!

I DIDN'T DO IT!

I DIDN'T DO IT!

DIDN'T DO WHAT, RICHIE?

Quik Muk

OVER 5 MILLION REGURGITATED

Alan's WORLD of FORKS

FORK ME TILL I F

PETS ON A STICK

DELIA! UH, NOTHING. NO! NO KISSES. I'M, UH, SICK. CONTAGIOUS.

JEEZ, CHILL. I WAS JUST BEING FRIENDLY. DOING A LITTLE PRE-SEASON SHOPLIFTING, RICARDO?

SICK, HUH? THAT EXPLAINS YOUR FAINTING SPELL THE OTHER NIGHT. YOU WERE ON A ROLL, MAN, THEN BLAMMO! YOU FELL OUT OF YOUR CHAIR AND CLONKED YOUR NOGGIN ON THE RADIATOR.

IT WAS WICKED FUNNY, BUT KIND OF CURTAILED THE GAME, Y'KNOW? ANYHOO, ME GOTTA MOTOR. LATER, SICKIE.

D&D DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE

SUICIDE ATTEMPT, EH? I FELL OUT OF MY CHAIR! YOU LIED!

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO DIE. COCKAMAMIE MEDICOS SAVED YOU. BUT YOU WERE OVER THE DIVIDE FOR A WHOLE THIRTY SECONDS. LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO SAY, "TIME TO PASS THE BATON AND TAKE A HOLIDAY."

WHAT WITH ME BEING DEATH AND ALL.

I WANNA REST MY HEAD IN MY HANDS, BUT I'M AFRAID IF I TOUCH MYSELF I'LL DIE.

HILARIOUS NEW COMEDY

YOU WON'T DIE, KIDDO, BUT DO IT OFTEN ENOUGH YOU MIGHT GO BLIND.

SO ON THE ONE HAND, I'M A WALKING BIOHAZARD AND ANYONE I LOVE WHO TOUCHES ME OR I TOUCH SKIN-TO-SKIN DIES...

PRETTY MUCH.

BUT ON THE OTHER HAND...

GACK.

THIS COULD BE FUN.

OR MAYBE NOT.

The END

THE RIDGES, built in 1874, was a lunatic asylum for the criminally insane.

We are told this is where electroshock, water therapy, and the lobotomy were born.

We are told there are still shackles in the basement.

But most intriguing of all, we were told about...

The Haunting of The Ridges

Reputedly one of the most haunted places on earth, the Ridges overlooks the college town of Athens, Ohio.

In 1993 budget cuts finally closed the struggling institution and it was eventually purchased by Ohio University.

Ron Wimberly, Scott Allie, and I had been invited to speak on the graphic novel at the aesthetics tech lab on the O.U. campus.

Since arriving we'd heard about the Ridges from the professors and students.

As well as the story of the stain hidden somewhere inside.

The stain was once a human being. An inmate named Margaret Schilling.

On December 1, 1978, Margaret, age fifty-three, managed to slip away unnoticed.

She then wandered through several self-locking security doors to Ward N. 20.

Originally a ward for the sick and infectious, N. 20 had been abandoned for years.

Trapped and undiscovered by search parties, Margaret died there of exposure.

Froze to death.

Forty-three days later she was found by maintenance.

Sunlight, magnified through the windows, had burned her fluids into the concrete floor.

Despite the best efforts to clean it, Margaret's stain has remained for almost thirty years.

Scott and I absolutely had to see it. We make horror comics for a living. 'Nuff said.

Ron, on the other hand, wasn't nearly as excited.

People Always want to see. Until they do..

Be careful nothing follows U home, Baby

sheeeit

The lower floor of the asylum had been turned into graduate art studios.

And we soon managed to find a student who had actually seen the stain before.

Scott talked her into leading us to the top floor. Where N. 2o was.

TAP

The dust was thick in the upper, windowless chambers of the asylum. Hard to breathe.

A cave's blackness enveloped us. Our sounds rang muted in narrow, vaulted spaces.

And we weren't alone.

I THINK... YEAH...

THIS IS IT.

SHE'S HERE.

You must understand...

I came here hoping to be scared. Hungry for something horrible.

And now we were staring at the last remains of a dead woman.

Perfectly etched.

And yet...

Nothing about the stain, nothing about this place, felt frightening.

The whole asylum reeked of tranquility. Serenity.

Later I discovered that Margaret had taken off her clothes, folded them neatly next to her, then laid down to die.

No longer was the stain a woman riddled with panic. Yanking at her hair. Gnawed by madness.

She was lovely now. Lying down with meticulous ease. Inviting the cold into her. Letting go willingly.

Later that night, as I went to sleep in Dr. Milton's attic (where the visiting artist stays)...

I imagined I was dying.

Not afraid. Not sad.

3145

Just slowly, sweetly rendered blind to the hopes and fears of my own skin.

A little past four a.m. I began to hear a trilling, panicked wail in my dreams.

I jerked to consciousness. Heart beating fast. But once awake the awful sound persisted.

Something swooped by my face, grazing me. Then one of the house cats pounded after it.

A bat. The cat was locked in combat with a bat up here in the attic.

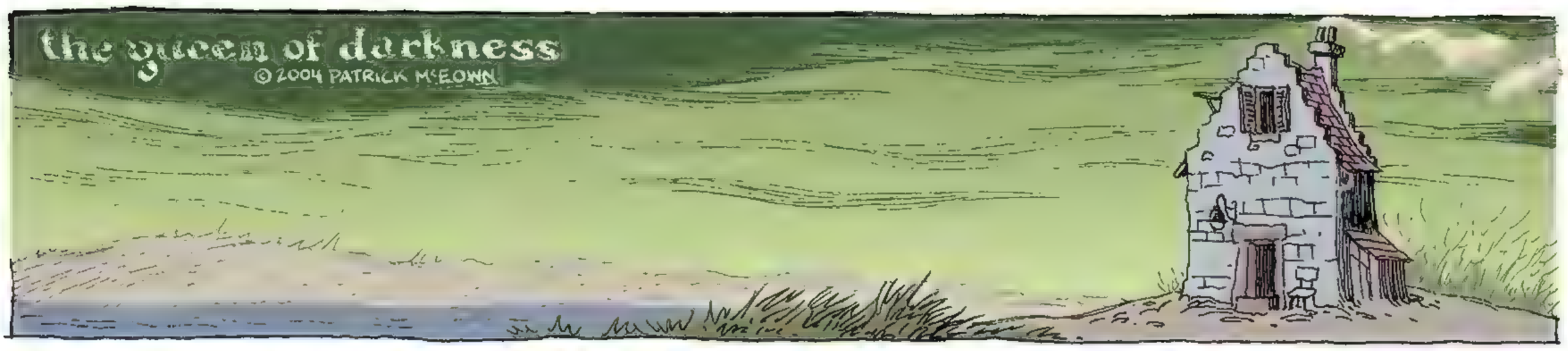
I watched fascinated as the cat gleefully, slowly, slaughtered the bat.

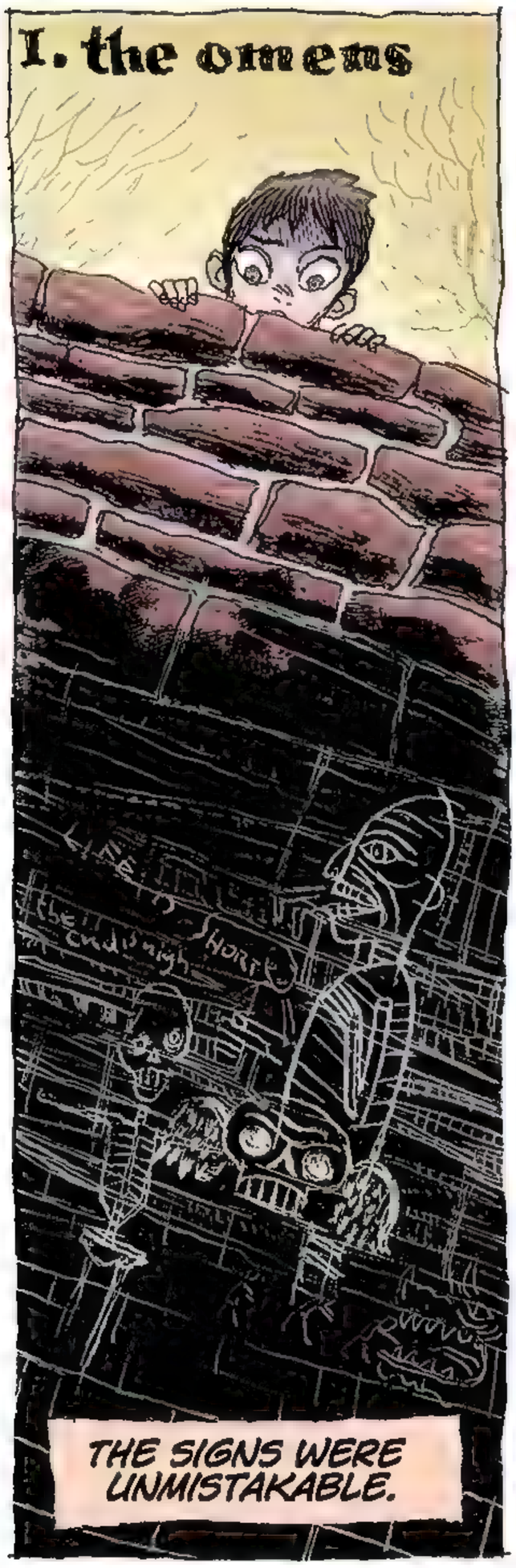
EE!!

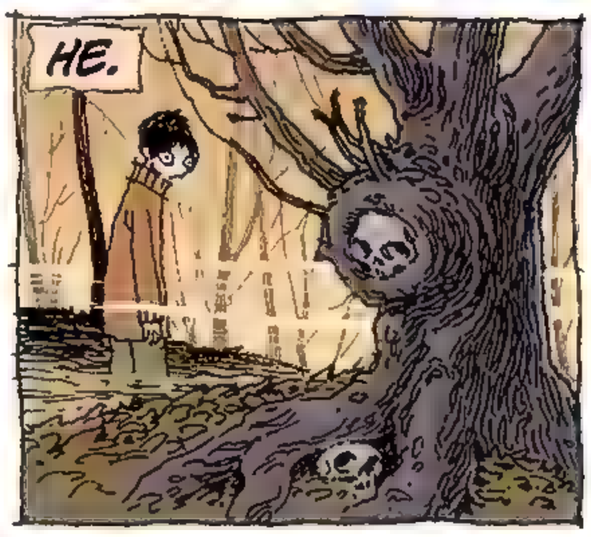
Blood.

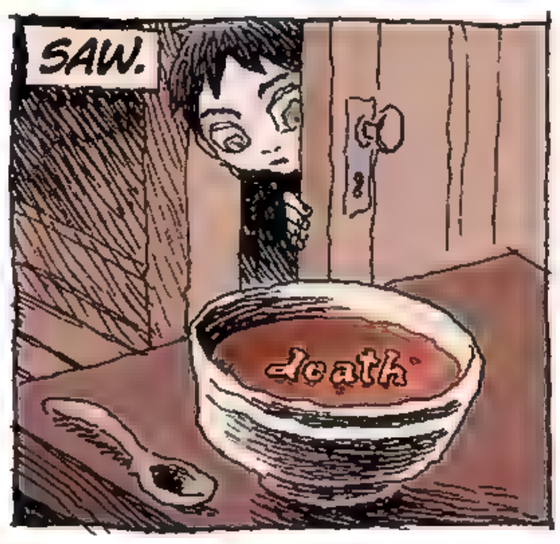
Murder.

Horror.









THE NEWSPAPERS CONFIRMED HIS SUSPICIONS...

...THEIR PAGES NOW GIVEN OVER SOLELY TO OBITUARIES.

FROM HIS ISLAND HE COULD SEE THE SMOKE

AND HEAR THE FAR-OFF SCREAMS.

ALL THROUGH THE DAYS AND INTO THE NIGHTS THEIR COLLECTIVE DEMISE WAFTED TOWARD HIM ON THE WIND.

II. the summons

HE WAITED FOR A MESSENGER, BUT IN VAIN, FOR IT SEEMED THAT NO ONE WOULD COME...

...UNTIL ONE MORNING.

HELL IS EMPTY.

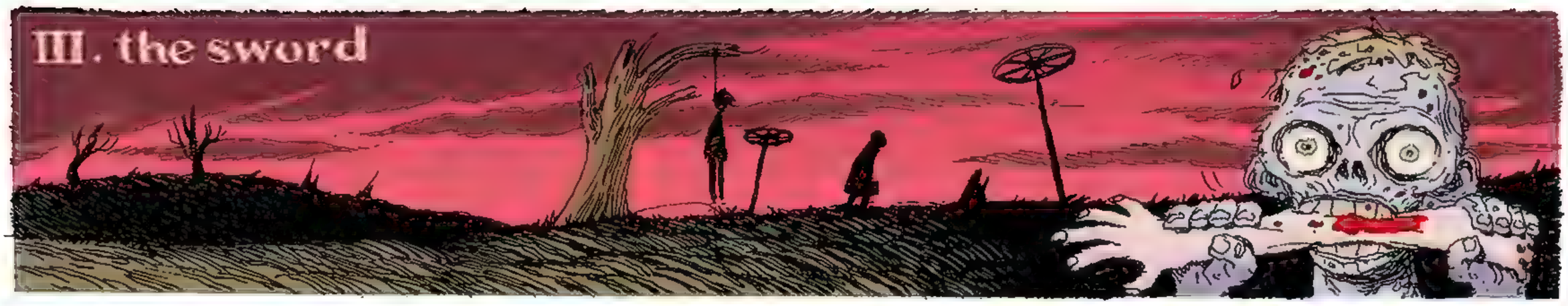
HE PACKED...

...AND TOOK ONE LAST LOOK AT HIS HOUSE.

KNOWING HE WOULD NEVER RETURN...

...HE CLIMBED INTO THE OLD MAN'S BOAT ...

... AND SET OFF FOR THE SCORCHED SHORES OF THE MAINLAND.



THE OLD MAN'S CRYPTIC WORDS WERE SUDDENLY CLEAR. HELL HAD DISGORGED ITS CONTENTS ONTO THE EARTH.

HE SAW NO SIGNS OF LIFE FOR DAYS.

AND EVEN WHEN HE FOUND HIMSELF NO LONGER ALONE...

...THERE WERE STILL NO SIGNS OF LIFE.

DESPITE THEIR NUMBERS...

...HE WASN'T AFRAID.

HIS ENTIRE LIFE HAD BEEN SPENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS MOMENT.

IT WAS OVER QUICKLY.

IV. the order

FORGED IN ANCIENT FURNACES AND HANDED DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES, THE SWORD HAD BEEN GIVEN TO HIM BY THE ORDER.

BORN INTO THEIR RANKS, HE WAS SWORN TO PROTECT HUMANITY AGAINST AN APOCALYPSE FORETOLD IN THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.

SCHOOLED IN ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES...

...HE LEARNED TO FIGHT EVIL IN ALL ITS FORMS.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD WAS THE SOURCE OF THE ORDER'S POWER. ITS SECRETS WERE KNOWN ONLY TO THE ELDERS. ACOLYTES WERE FORBIDDEN TO OPEN ITS COVERS.

AT THE APPOINTED TIME, EACH ACOLYTE WAS GIVEN A WEAPON...

...AND SENT OUT INTO THE WORLD.

THEY WERE TO REMAIN VIGILANT AND AWAIT THE SIGNS.

NOW EVERYTHING THEY FEARED HAD COME TO PASS.

V. the city

FROM THE MOMENT HE ARRIVED, HE COULD SENSE THEM...

THEY WEREN'T THE DEAD...

...BUT THEY WEREN'T REALLY LIVING, EITHER.

THEY ESCORTED HIM TO THE EDGE OF TOWN.

HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD GONE WRONG. WHY HADN'T THE WARNINGS COME SOON ENOUGH TO AVERT THE APOCALYPSE?

HAD THE ORDER FAILED?

HE WASN'T SURE OF HIS PURPOSE ANYMORE.

HE HAD HOPED TO FIND SIGNS, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THEY WEREN'T TO BE FOUND AMONG THESE BROKEN PEOPLE.

HE WAS NOT SAD TO LEAVE.

VI. the brothers

HE RECOGNIZED THEM, EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE.

THEY WERE KNOWN SIMPLY AS THE TWINS.

EVEN DURING THEIR TIME IN THE ORDER, NO ONE KNEW IF THEY WERE ACTUALLY RELATED...

...EXCEPT FOR THE ELDERS, WHO TREATED THEM WITH UNCHARACTERISTIC DEFERENCE.

THIS LED TO RUMORS ABOUT A DIABOLICAL LINEAGE.

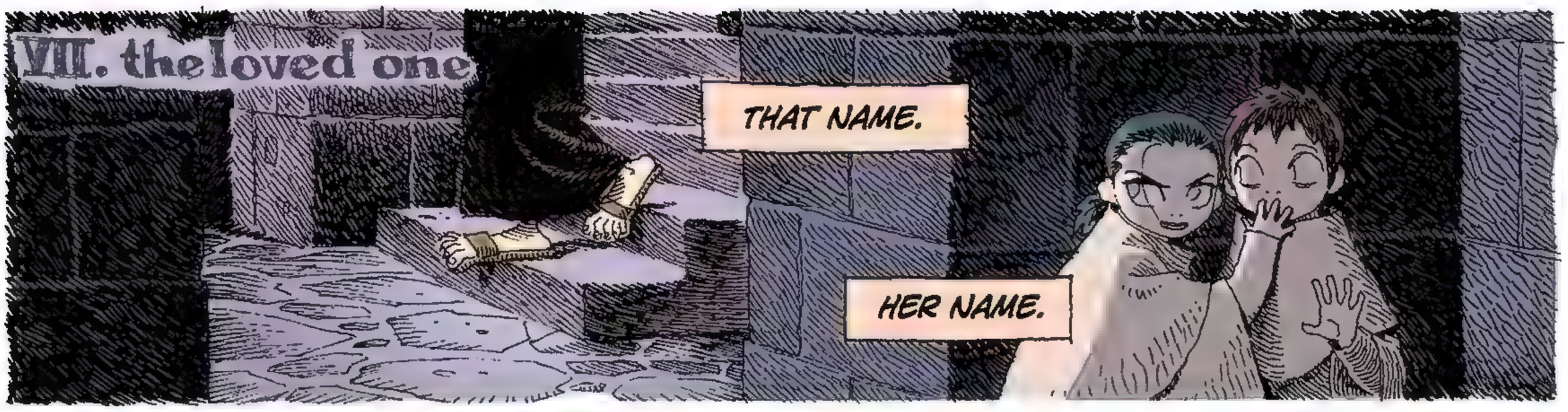
GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEIR PRESENCE WASN'T UNEXPECTED.

...A LOCATION...

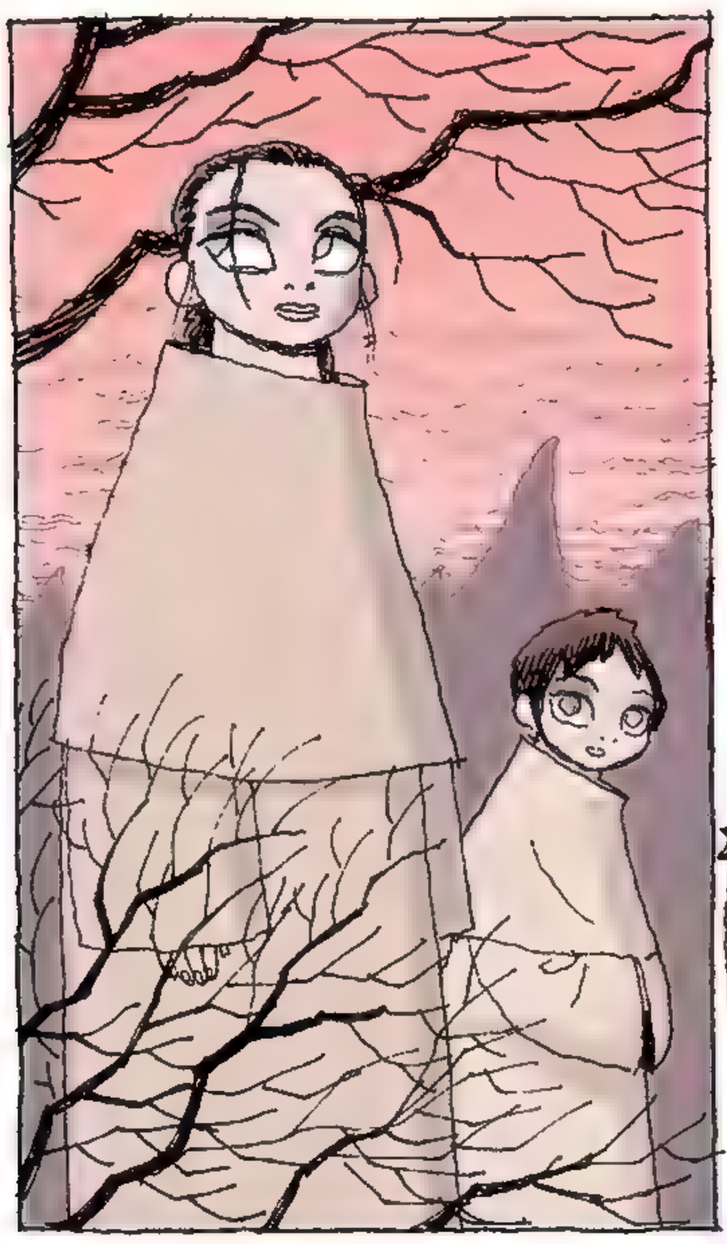
...AND A NAME HE HADN'T HEARD IN YEARS.

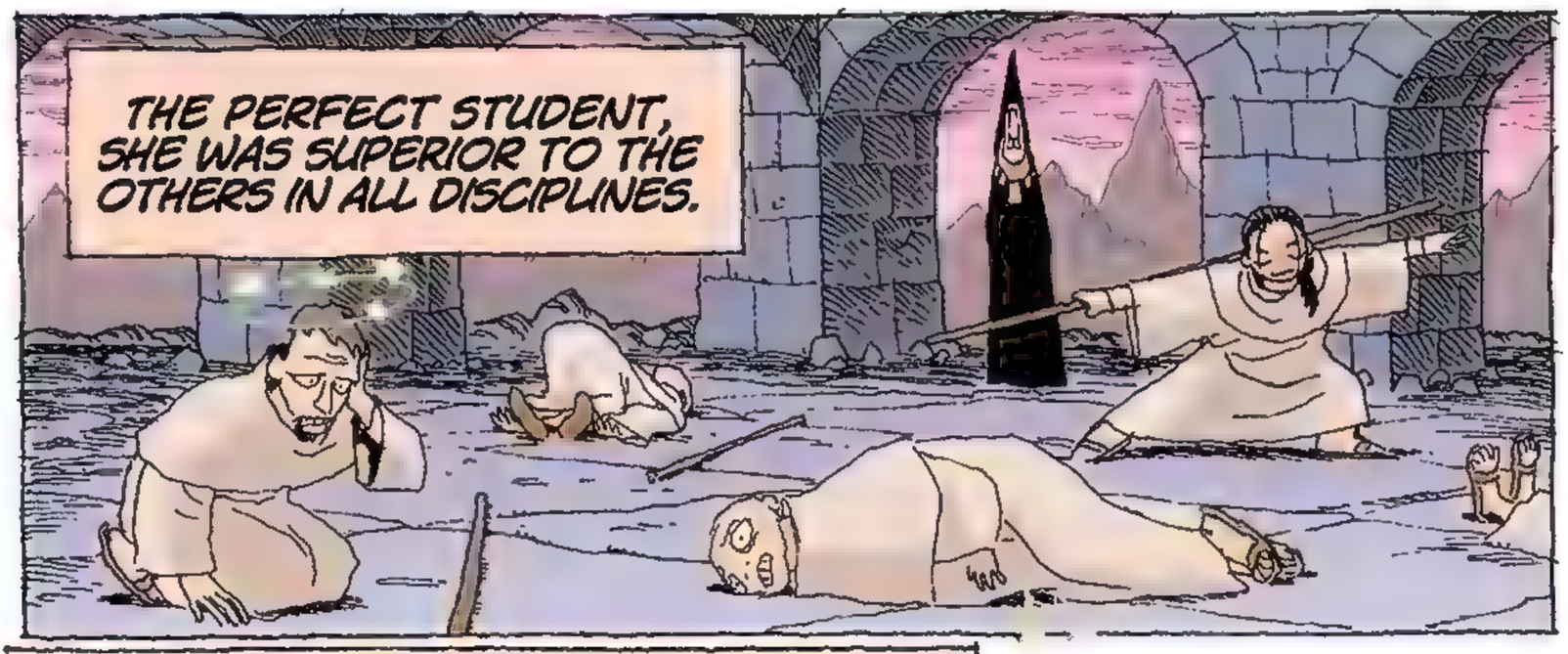
BUT NOTHING MORE.

AS USUAL, THEY HAD APPEARED AS IF FROM NOWHERE, BEARING INFORMATION THAT EVEN THE ELDERS COULDN'T HAVE POSSESSED. THEY DIVULGED ONLY TWO THINGS...

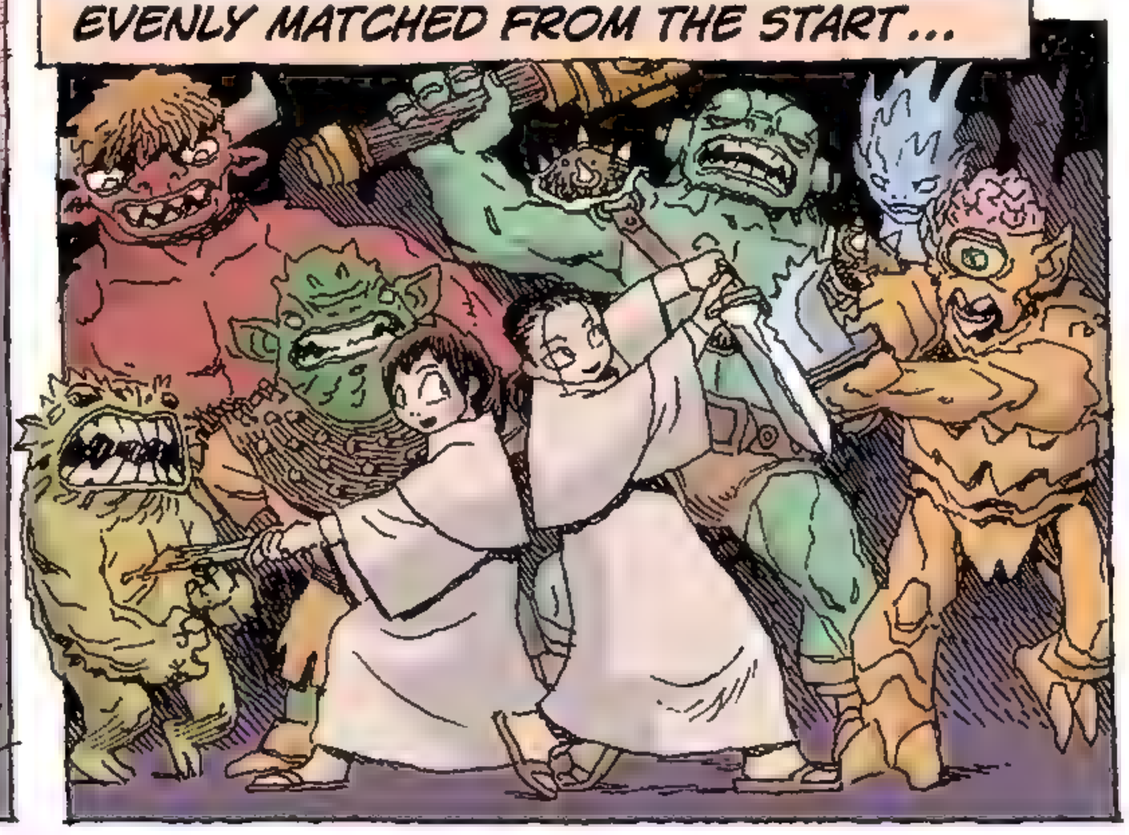


AT ONE TIME HE HAD CALLED HER SISTER, THOUGH THEY SHARED NO COMMON BLOOD.

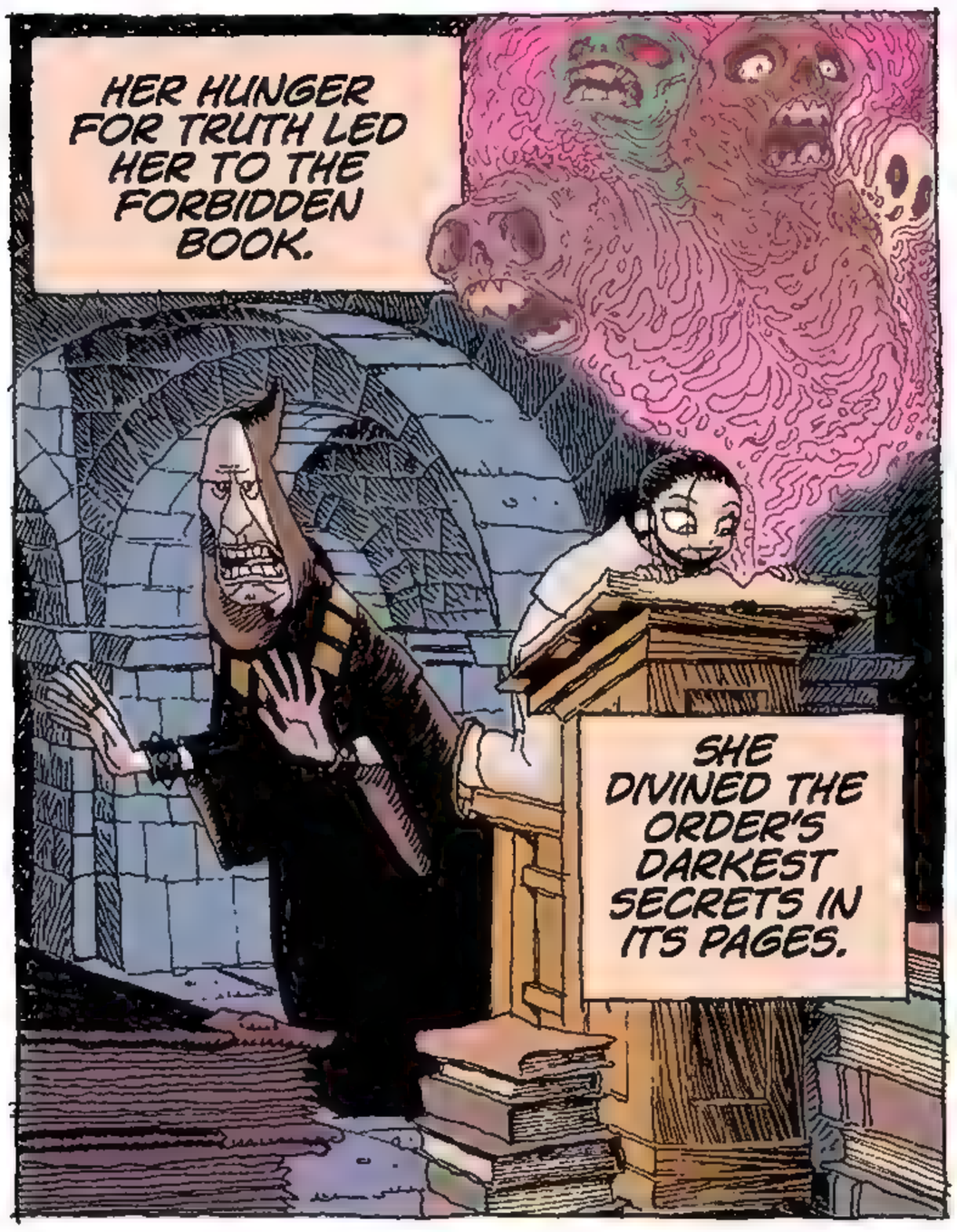


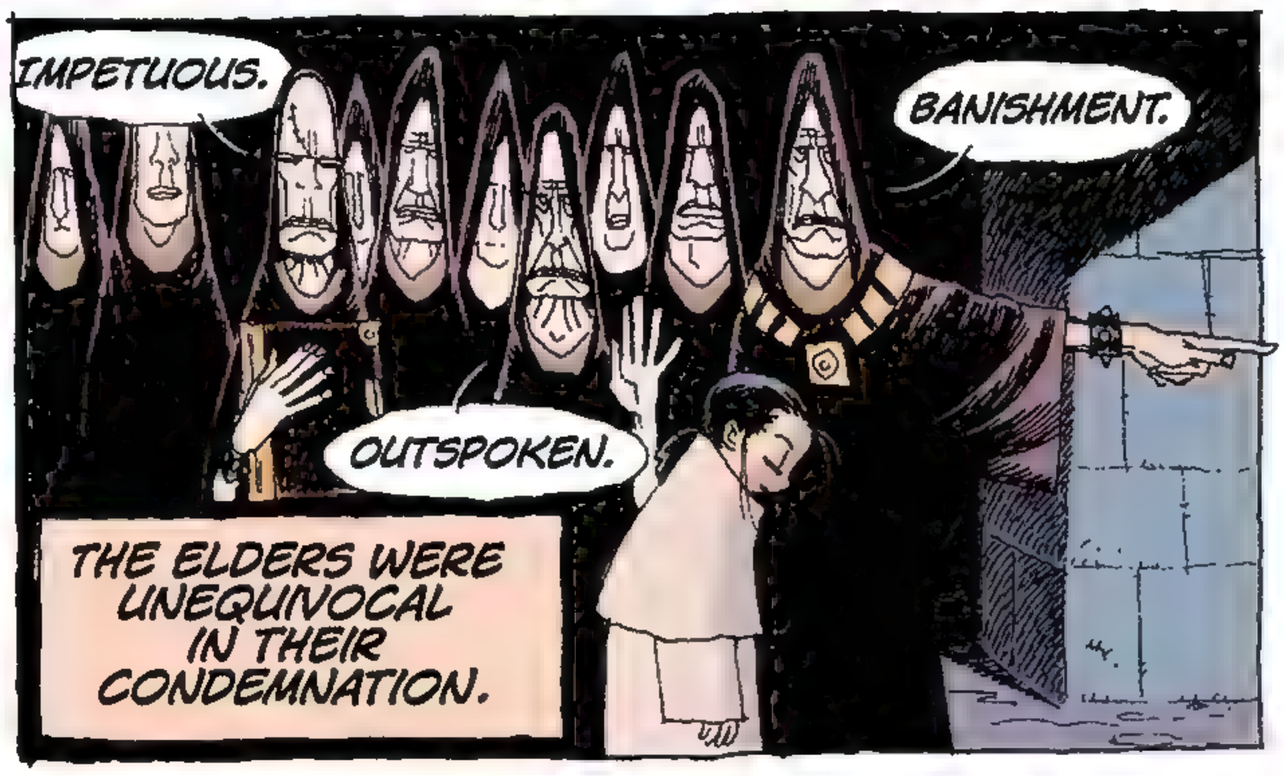


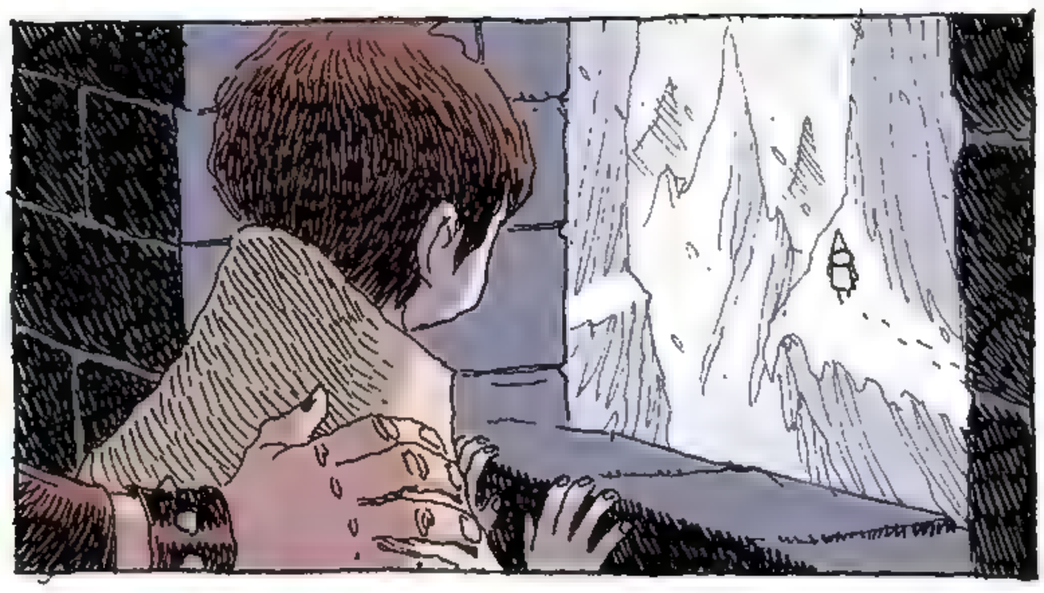
EVENLY MATCHED FROM THE START...



...AT A SUITABLE AGE, THEY BECAME CLOSER STILL.



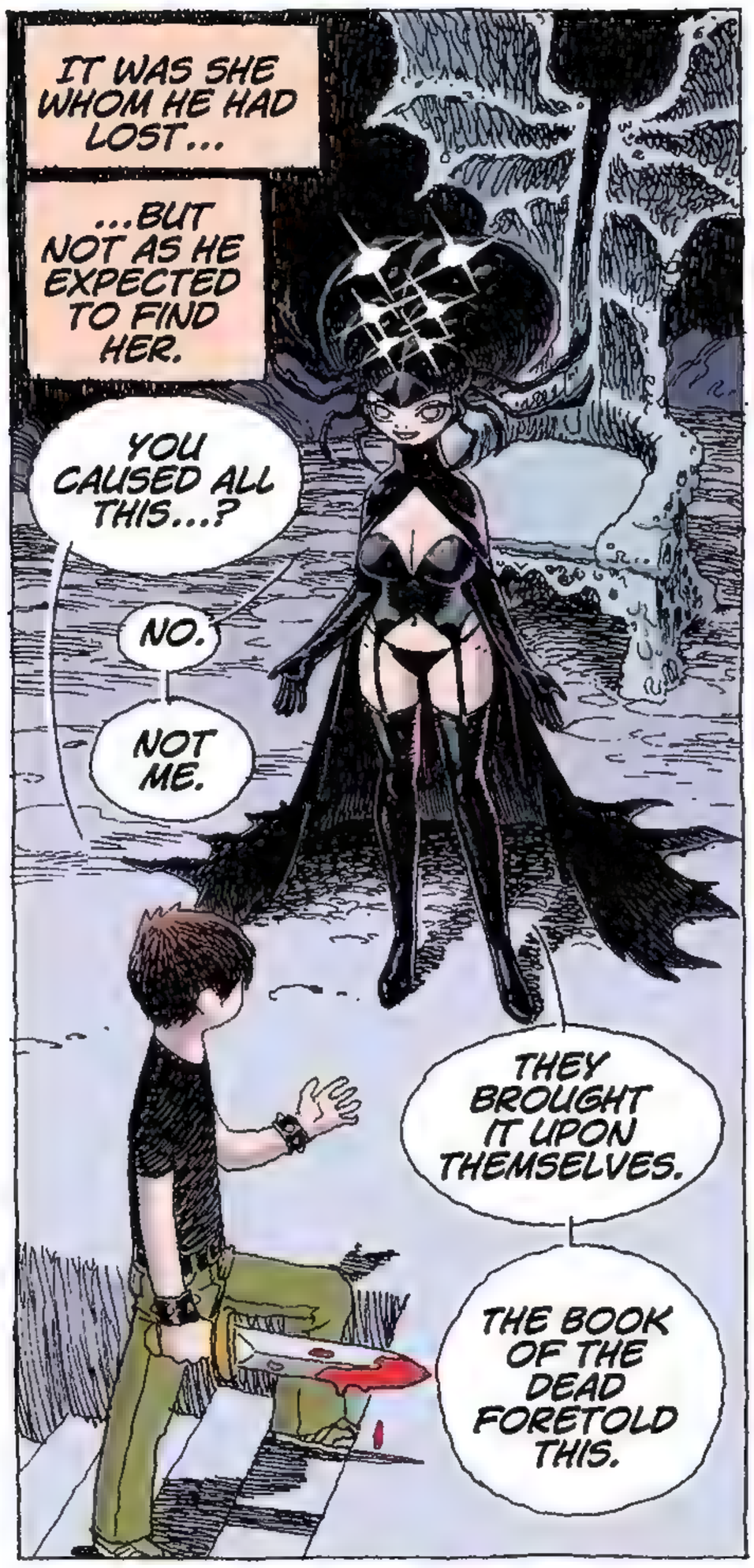


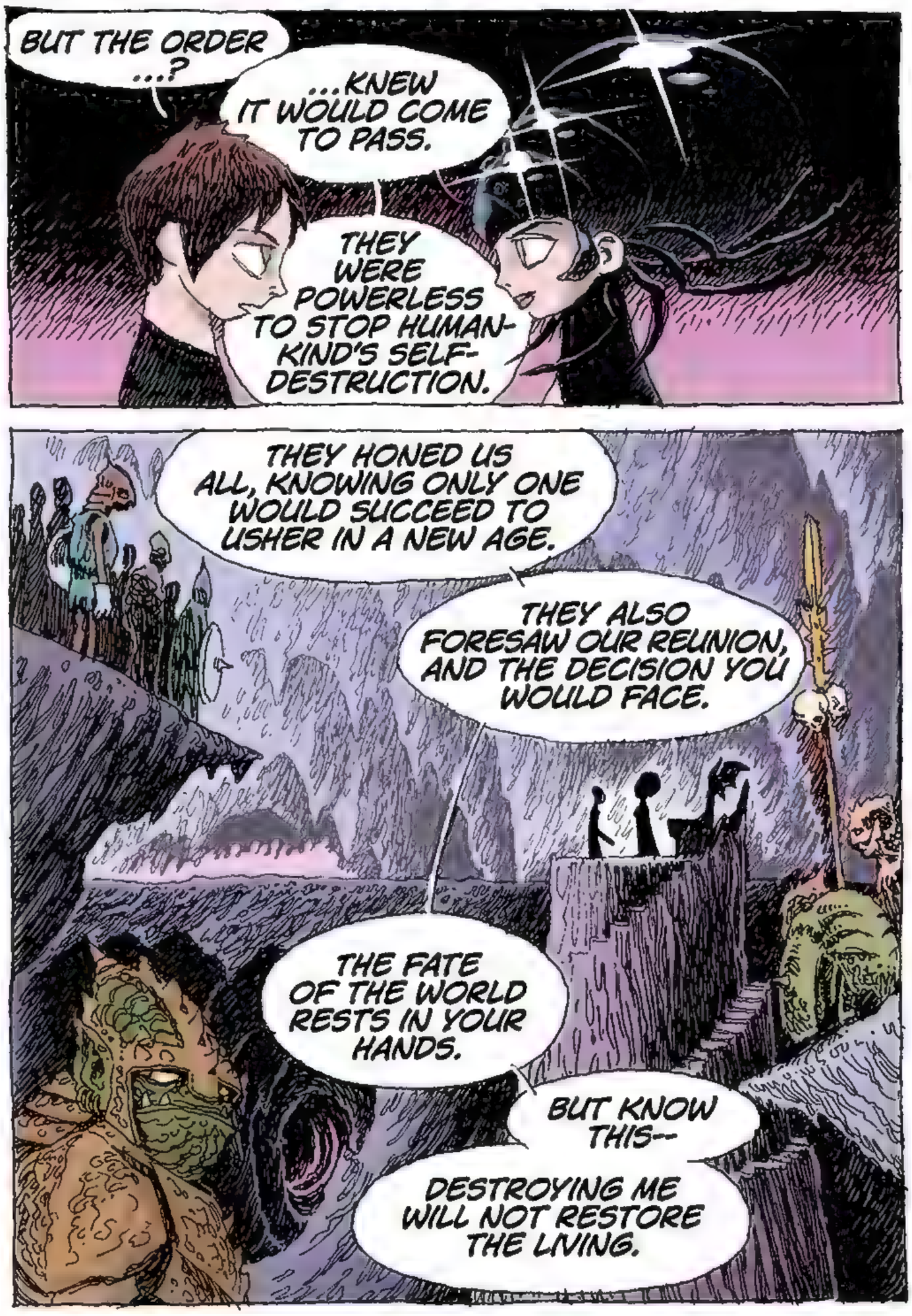


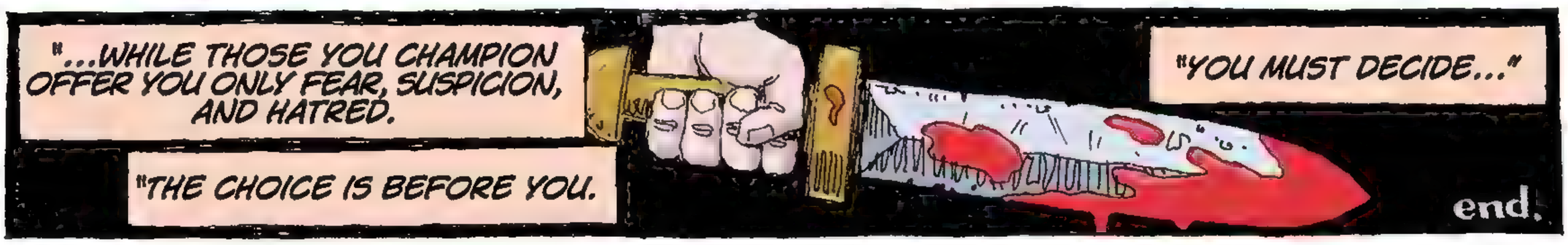
THEY WOULD NOT LET HIM FOLLOW HER.

VIII. the fortress
IT WAS AS THE BROTHERS HAD SAID. HE FOUND THE ENTRANCE AND DESCENDED DEEP INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH.
DRIVEN ONLY BY A NAME AND A FAINT HOPE...
...HE WANDERED FOR DAYS WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING A LIVING SOUL.
THEN HE CAME UPON THE DEAD.
AND SMOTE THEM.
THEIR GROWING NUMBERS REASSURED HIM...
...THAT THE END WAS CLOSE AT HAND.

IX . the reckoning


IT WAS SHE WHOM HE HAD LOST...
...BUT NOT AS HE EXPECTED TO FIND HER.
YOU CAUSED ALL THIS...?
NO.
NOT ME.
THEY BROUGHT IT UPON THEMSELVES.
THE BOOK OF THE DEAD FORETOLD THIS.


BUT THE ORDER ...?
...KNEW IT WOULD COME TO PASS.
THEY WERE POWERLESS TO STOP HUMAN-KIND'S SELF-DESTRUCTION.
THEY HONED US ALL, KNOWING ONLY ONE WOULD SUCCEED TO USHER IN A NEW AGE.
THEY ALSO FORESAW OUR REUNION, AND THE DECISION YOU WOULD FACE.
THE FATE OF THE WORLD RESTS IN YOUR HANDS.
BUT KNOW THIS--
DESTROYING ME WILL NOT RESTORE THE LIVING.



KAGOZORI

JAMIE S RICH & GUY DAVIS

LONG AGO, WHEN JAPAN WAS IN TURMOIL, LORD KANETO LED HIS KINGDOM BENEVOLENTLY.

THOUGH WAR RAVAGED HIS COUNTRY, HIS SEASIDE HOME REMAINED UNTOUCHED, AND AN ALLIANCE WITH HIS FAMILY WAS A MUCH SOUGHT-AFTER PRIZE.

ONE SUCH ALLIANCE WAS ARRANGED THROUGH MARRIAGE. KANETO'S ONLY DAUGHTER WOULD JOIN WITH THE ELDEST SON OF A PROMINENT FAMILY, BRINGING THE TWO CLANS TOGETHER.

HOWEVER, WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE OTHER FAMILY HAD MISREPRESENTED THEIR FINANCIAL STANDING, KANETO WITHDREW THE DEAL.

IN ANGER, THIS NEW ENEMY PLACED A PRICE ON THE HEAD OF KANETO'S DAUGHTER-- A BOUNTY BACKED UP BY A TERRIBLE CURSE. WERE SHE TO LEAVE THE PALACE GROUNDS, SHE WOULD DIE BEFORE SHE TRAVELED TWENTY YARDS.

IT IS TO MY SHAME THAT THEIR DISHONOR SHOULD BRING SUCH PAIN TO MY HOUSE...

...BUT YOU MUST RESPECT THIS UNTIL I CAN FIND A WAY TO UNDO IT.

OF COURSE, FATHER.

RECOGNIZING THAT GREED SCALED CASTLE WALLS, PROPELLED ON THE PROMISE OF MONEY, LORD KANETO ASSIGNED HIS DAUGHTER A FULL-TIME GUARD.

LITTLE DID HE KNOW THAT BY SHIELDING HER FROM HARM...

...HE WAS EXPOSING HIS PRECIOUS CHILD...

...TO SOMETHING EVEN MORE DANGEROUS.

CAGED LIKE A BIRD, BARRED FROM SEEING THE BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES OF HER BELOVED COUNTRY, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE MERE FOOTSTEPS AWAY.

FORBIDDEN FROM HER HEART'S DESIRE, THOUGH HE STOOD BY HER SIDE.

THE CURSE OF AN ENEMY, THE CURSE OF CLASS--EACH TURNED INCHES INTO MILES.

THE GIRL'S ONE MEANS OF ESCAPE WAS THE OCEAN.

SHE HAD ALWAYS LOVED THE WATER, THE BACK AND FORTH OF THE TIDE. IT WAS CALMING.

SHE WASN'T AS CLEVER AS SHE THOUGHT. HER GUARD KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON...

SUCH WAS HIS LOVE, HE'D SACRIFICE HIS OWN SENSE OF DUTY TO INDULGE HER PRECIOUS MOMENTS OF PEACE.

IT ALLOWED HER A CONNECTION TO THE ANCESTORS WHO HAD GONE BEFORE, AND TO THE MANY SOULS WHO HAD BEEN LOST TO THE SEA.

SHE ENJOYED HOW THE *KAMI* WOULD EMERGE FROM THE BRINE TO VISIT WITH HER, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS A HIGH-RANKING DAUGHTER IN A NOBLE FAMILY, IT WAS HER JOB TO MAKE SURE THESE NATURE SPIRITS WERE HAPPY.

BY VENERATING THE WATER THEY CALLED HOME, THE *KAMI* WOULD IN TURN BRING PROSPERITY TO HER FATHER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

SOON, THOUGH, THE EDGE OF THE SHORE WAS NOT ENOUGH. THE PRINCESS BEGAN WALKING OUT INTO THE WATER...

...EACH TIME GOING A LITTLE FARTHER. SOME WOULD CALL IT TEMPTING FATE, BUT DID THE CURSE EXTEND TO THE OCEAN?

AFTER ALL, IF HER FATHER OWNED THE LAND THAT TOUCHED THE OCEAN, DID HE NOT OWN A PIECE OF THE OCEAN, AS WELL?

AND IF YOU OWNED A PIECE OF IT, WHO WAS TO SAY YOU DIDN'T OWN IT ALL?

EVENTUALLY, THOUGH, SHE DID GO TOO FAR, AND NEVER CAME BACK.

DON'T TELL ME SHE DROWNED. NO ONE KNOWS THAT SHE DID.

IN FACT, ANY MAN WHO CAN RETURN MY DAUGHTER TO ME CAN NAME HIS REWARD.

THE SAMURAI, WHO HAD BEEN OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF FROM LOSING HIS TRUE LOVE, AND SHAME FOR FAILING HIS POST...

...SUDDENLY REALIZED A WAY TO REMEDY BOTH AILMENTS.

USE THIS, AND IT WILL BRING BACK WHATEVER--OR WHOEVER--IT IS THAT YOU WANT RETURNED TO YOU.

BUT ONLY IF YOUR OWN HEART WANTS IT ENOUGH.

"BEWARE OF THE IMPURITY OF YOUR OWN DESIRES."

ARMED WITH THE WITCH'S WORDS AND HER ARCANE MIXTURE, HE RETURNED TO THE SPOT WHERE HIS LOVE HAD DISAPPEARED.

MY LOVE ...

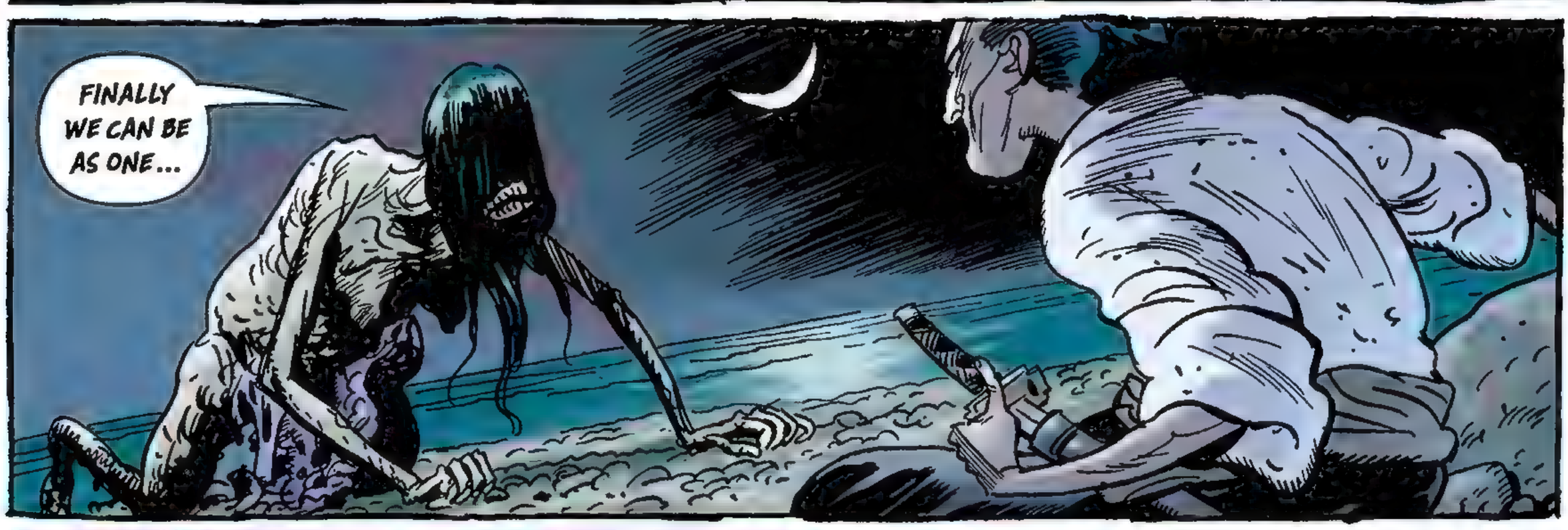
I KNOW YOU CARED FOR ME.

HOW I LONGED FOR THIS EMBRACE.

AHH--!

LOVE MEEEE...

MY DARLING...


FINALLY WE CAN BE AS ONE...

KISS ME.

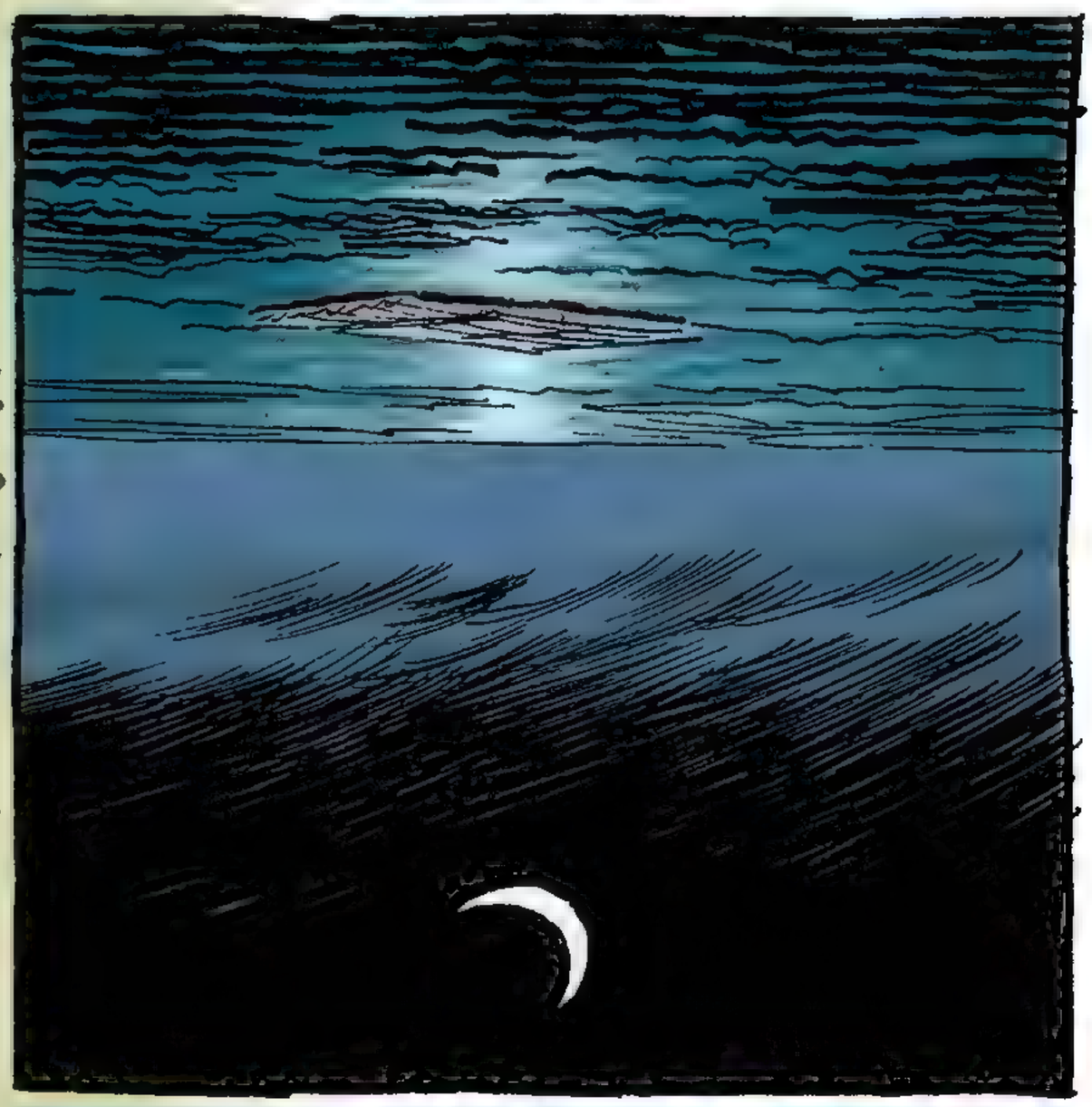
NO, DON'T! WE'VE WAITED SO LONG TO BE TOGETHER--

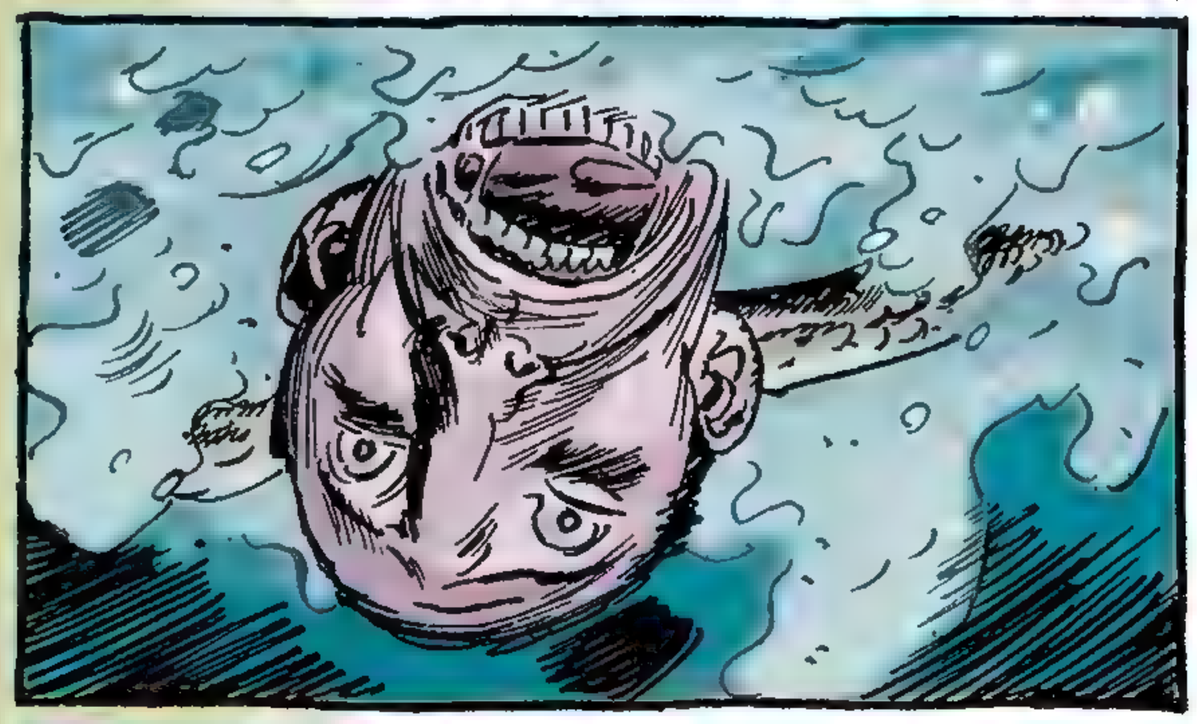
THE THING THAT EMERGED FROM THE SEA WAS NOT THE GIRL HE HAD ONCE LOVED.

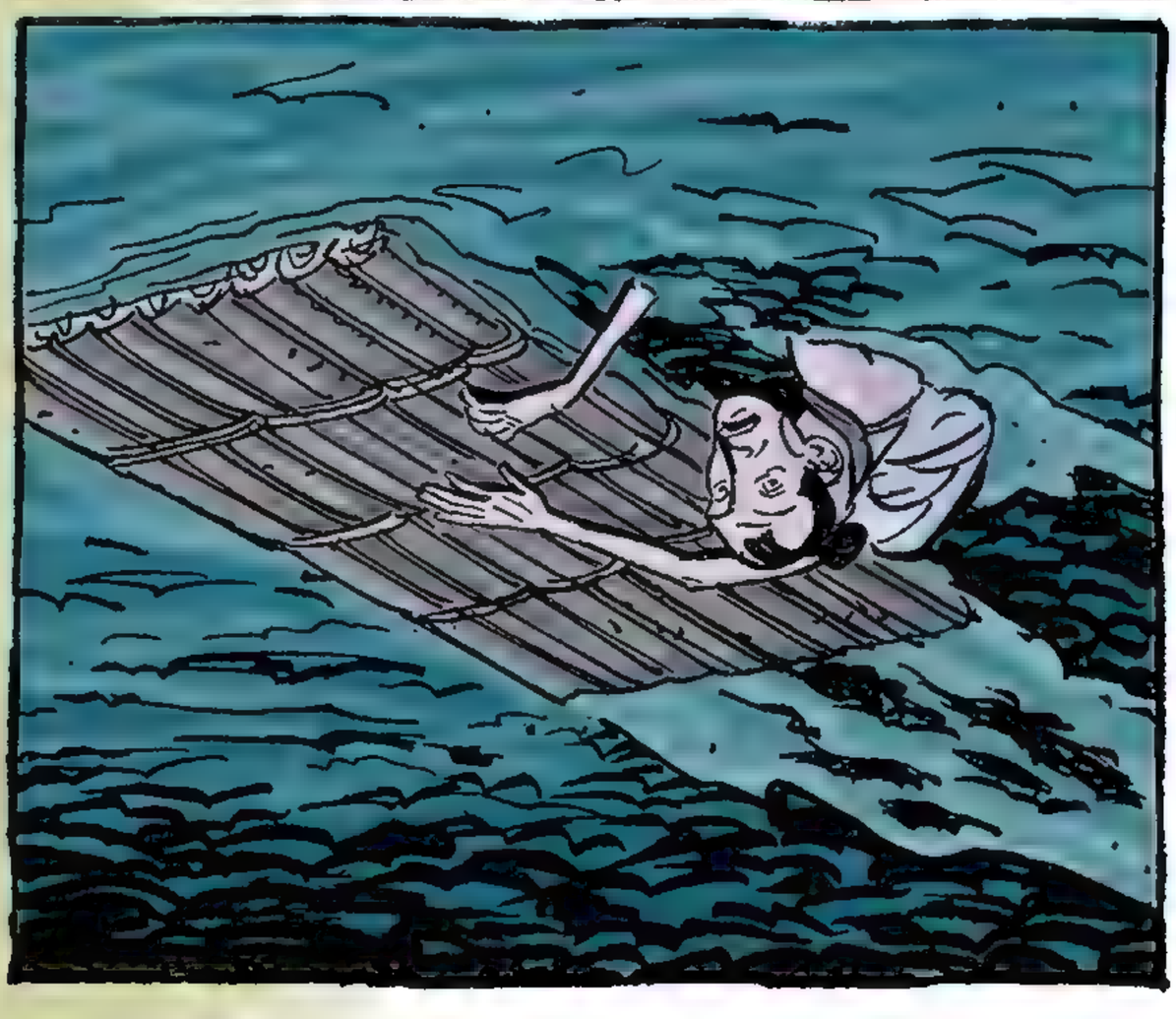
HE VOWED TO RETURN IT TO WHERE IT CAME FROM.

ONLY THE *KAMI* WHOM THE GIRL HAD SPENT MANY A NIGHT PRAYING FOR...

...COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THEIR DESCENDENT IN HEARTACHE.







Big or Small...

Short or Tall...

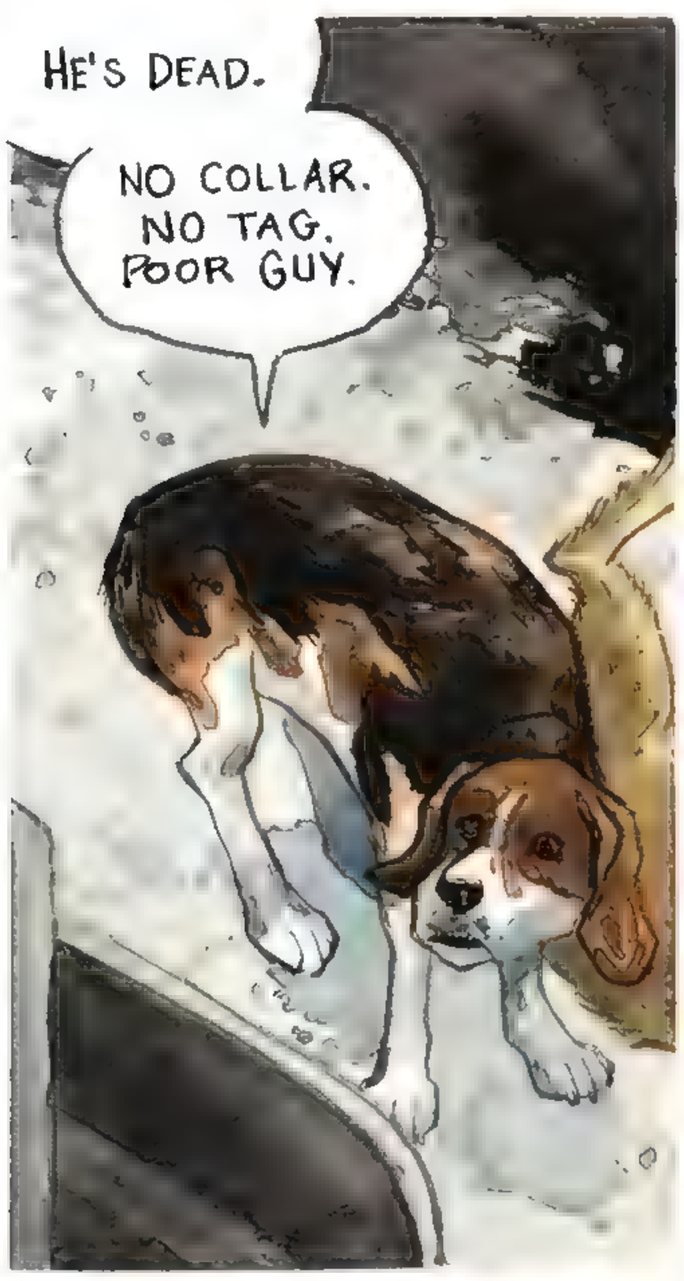
Here's what happens to us all...

We go to sleep, We close our eyes...

And Leave behind a nest of flies.

TRADITIONAL CANINE VERSE — AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Let SLEEPING DOGS Lie by Evan DORKIN and JILL Thompson 2005


HE'S DEAD.
NO COLLAR. NO TAG. POOR GUY.

RIGHT.
WELL, WE'D BETTER GET A MOVE ON BEFORE ANYONE SEES US.

AS THE GREAT DOG DUG THE LAKES AND MOUNTAINS TO COVER THOSE LOST IN THAT GREAT BATTLE...

...SO WE LAY YOU TO REST BENEATH THE GROUND HE HAS GIVEN US.

THE BLACK DOG HAS TAKEN YOU INTO HER PACK, AS SHE COMES FOR US ALL.

MAY SHE LEAD YOU TO THE BETTER PLACE--

WHERE THE GREAT DOG SITS, WHERE YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN KNOW PAIN OR SICKNESS OR HARDSHIP.

AND MAY HE WHO IS ABOVE ALL CALL YOU BY NAME TO RUN FREE IN HIS END-LESS FIELDS.

PEACE ON YOUR JOURNEY, BROTHER.

peace.

AAAAAAAAWOOO

Prrrtham.

Prrrtham, nara rictus.

WELL, I'M JUST GLAD OUR WATCH IS OVER. I DON'T THINK I COULD TAKE ANOTHER BURIAL.

ME NEITHER. I GOT NIGHT-MARES THIS WHOLE MONTH.

I JUST DON'T GET IT. DON'T THEY **LOOK**?

THE STREETS ARE BAD ENOUGH. BUT THE **ROADS**? YOU GOTTA BE **CRAZY** OR SOMETHING.

OF COURSE YOU DON'T GET IT, REX.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE ON YOUR OWN. **NONE** OF YOU DO.

YOU GET HUNGRY. TIRED.

A LITTLE STUPID.

maybe a little crazy.

YOU JUST WANT TO GET TO THE **NEXT** PLACE...

WHERE THERE MIGHT BE **FOOD** OR **SHELTER**.

OR SOMEONE TO **TALK** TO.

SOMETIMES YOU DON'T CARE. YOU JUST GO.

AND WHATEVER HAPPENS...

...happens

.....

Say ... uh... anybody wanna bat a ball around or something?

THUNK

WHAT THE?

AAAH!! IT'S THAT WITCH CAAAT!

WHAT'S SHE DOIN' HERE?

Help me! You ... HAVE To ... HELP ME!

HELP you?

WE ALMOST DIED BECAUSE OF YOU.

YEAH! YOU AN' THAT LOUSY WITCH COVEN OF YOURS!

P-Pleease! We're ALL in DANGER Here!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, LADY.

REX, GET THE DOOR, WILL YOU?

THE GRAVEYARD? OUR GRAVEYARD?

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU DOING THERE?

NO! YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME!

I WAS AT THE GRAVEYARD!

RAISING THE DEAD.

"AFTER YOU DESTROYED MY SISTERS, I VOWED I WOULD HAVE MY REVENGE.

"I DISCOVERED YOUR BURIAL GROUND WHILE SPYING ON YOU, AND GATHERED A SPELL KIT FROM MY LATE MASTER'S LAIR--"

Vertitirigmo das fantu deshme--

"--TO CREATE AN ARMY OF THE DEAD THAT WOULD KILL YOU ALL.

"ALONE I COULD ONLY RAISE A FEW OF THE UNDEAD. BUT THEY WERE ENOUGH TO SERVE MY PURPOSES."

BUH-BUH

Shif Shif

BB-BRAAAINS

HEAR ME, YOU DAMNED **MONGRELS**! I HAVE BROUGHT YOU BACK AS MY **INSTRUMENTS OF REVENGE** AGAINST THOSE WHO...

"UNFORTUNATELY EVEN DEAD THEY WOULDN'T SERVE A CAT.

"BUT THEY WERE PERFECTLY WILLING TO EAT ONE.

"I ONLY MANAGED TO ESCAPE --"

GRAFF RAFF!!

"--WHEN THEY ATTACKED A NEIGHBORHOOD DOG..."

I... I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, SO I CAME HERE.

YOU DO BELIEVE ME... DON'T YOU?

REX, OPEN THE GATE.

WAIT! YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME! ONCE THEY FINISH FEEDING THEY'LL COME HERE!

NOW YOU'RE TALKIN', ACE-- BOUNCE HER OUT ON HER BLACK-MAGIC ASS!

HERE YOU GO, ACE. HOPE SHE LANDS ON HER HEAD.

CLOSE THE GATE, REX.

CLOSE THE GATE, REX.

CLOSE THE GODDAMNED GATE, REX!

STUPID CAT! HADDA GO AN' RAISE THE DEAD, HUH?!

BAM

SKRATCH

SCRITCH

YOU SMELL THAT? DEATH! WALKIN', BREATHING DEATH!

EVERYONE, CALM DOWN! IT'S A NEW GATE. MY OWNERS JUST BOUGHT IT-- THERE'S NO WAY THEY CAN--

SKRAAAAK

GGGRAAAF

GRAAWWFF

AAAAA

MREEOW!

BESIDES, I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR ANY MORE FUNERALS, TODAY!

WE'RE WITH YOU, ACE!

YUCCH! DEB DOG TATHTE LIKE THIT!

STOP! DON'T BITE THEM! AND DON'T LET THEM BITE YOU! OR YOU'LL BECOME ONE OF THEM!

AAAAH!

PTOO!

PTOOIE! NOW SHE TELLS US!

I don't understand... ...you saved me, even though I...

DON'T GET MUSHY, SISTER. NOBODY'S SAFE UNTIL YOU TELL ME HOW TO STOP THOSE THINGS.

I-I can't perform a counterspell without my kit.

THEN HOW CAN --

we can't. We'd need **thumbs and guns** to destroy those creatures...

"...and even that might not work."

WHITEY, C'MON!

EVERYBODY! IN HERE! HURRY!

WAAH! WE'RE DOOMED!

SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING!

I AM! I'M PANICKING!

I WISH THE **WISE DOG** WAS HERE!

YEAH! INSTEAD OF **ME**!

I AIN'T BEEN THIS **SMUSHED** SINCE I WAS **TUSSLIN' FOR MOMMA'S MILK!**

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

THEY'RE MY FRIENDS.

I GOTTA DO **SOMETHING**! MAYBE I CAN LEAD THEM AWAY OR--

SORRY, BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING **ANY-WHERE!**

MREEOW!

WHY, YOU-- **WHAT** ARE YOU DOING?

SOMETHING **DECENT** FOR ONCE...

HEY!

HEY, YOU **DUMB DEAD DOGS!**

FRESH **KITTY BRAINS! RIGHT HERE!**

SNIF

WARRF?

KITTY BRAIN

COME ON, YOU FLEABAGS OF BONES!

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!

wow. WHat got into her?

SHE'S NUTS! DON'T SHE SEE THAT TRUCK?

DON'T WORRY, PUGS.

"SHE SEES IT."

SCREEE

KRUMPSS!

SPLETCH

JESUS, FRANK! WE HIT A DOG! WE HIT A LOT OF DOGS!

SHUT UP AN' KEEP DRIVIN'! HALF THE PEOPLE UP HERE'S ANIMAL FREAKS AN' THE OTHER HALF'S LAWYERS!

You guys remember when this was a quiet neighborhood?

WONDER WHY SHE DID IT? I THOUGHT SHE WANTED US DEAD.

CRAZY KID. MAYBE IN HER NEXT LIFE SHE'LL WISE UP AN' STAY AWAY FROM THAT WITCH CRAP.

HEY, PEOPLE ALERT! WE BETTER HIGH-TAIL IT.

HEY, ORPHAN! COME ON!

...yeah yeah...

"It is nought good
A sleeping hound
to wake."

-Chaucer, "Troilus and Criseyde"

THE END

The Dark Horse Book of MONSTERS

The Dark Horse Book of Monsters

Six Potent Tales of Monstrosity and Doom—Told in Words and Pictures; Including the sea-borne Menaces of William Hope Hodgson.

LISTEN! YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME, TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY! FOR...

"...I WITNESSED THE END OF THE WORLD!"

A RIFF BORKUM ADVENTURE INTO THE WEIRD!

"THE *END* CAME IN NOVEMBER 1961, IN THE *HIGHEST PEAKS* OF THE GREAT HIMALAYAS.

"FEW WHO WERE *ALIVE* AT THE TIME KNEW IT WAS THE END, BUT I WAS *THERE*. WE *ALL* WERE. GRUFF OLD *DOC XERXES*, *JUNE* -- BRAVE, *BRAVE* JUNE -- AND MYSELF.

"THERE WAS *NEWS* POPPING, OUT OF NEW YORK, BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE *TIME* FOR IT. WE WERE HUNTING -- HUNTING THE *STRANGEST* GAME OF ALL!"

-- ASTONISHING DEVELOPMENTS IN NEW YORK --

Heh. WE'LL LOOK INTO THAT *NEXT* -- EH, DOC? BUT *RIGHT NOW*, I'M BETTING HE'S HOLED UP --

OH, *RIFF!*

THIS IS SO *DANGEROUS* -- WE DON'T KNOW *WHAT* WE'RE GETTING INTO!

EXACTLY WHY IT'S GOT TO BE *DONE*, JUNE.

AND *ADMIT* IT -- YOU WOULDN'T HAVE IT *ANY OTHER WAY*, WOULD YOU?

"WE'D BEEN TOGETHER FOR *SO LONG*. AND OUR EXPLOITS -- WHY, *NO ONE* HAD DISCOVERED MORE OF THE WORLD'S WONDERS!

"IT WAS *WE* WHO FOUGHT *SUMBA, THE THING FROM THE FETID SWAMP* --"

BACK! *BACK*, I SAY!

EEEEEEEEE

"-- DISCOVERED THE NIBBITS FROM NOBBIT --"

RIFF! RIFF, THERE ARE *TOO MANY* -- !

AAA! THEY'RE IN MY *HAIR! AAA!*

"-- SLEW *GARAKK, THE HUNTER FROM SPACE* -- AND SO MUCH MORE!"

PAFF *PAFF*

GASP SOB

WHAT DO YOU *SAY*, DOC?

WHAT I *ALWAYS* SAY, RIFF!

WE'LL TAKE 'EM *ALL* ON -- THE MONSTERS, THE ALIENS, THE *CREEPING UNKNOWN* -- AND *THEY'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM!*

"BUT LITTLE DID WE KNOW THAT EVEN AS WE *LAUGHED* THERE IN OUR TENTS, *CONFIDENT* IN OUR WITS AND OUR STRENGTH --

"-- THE *END* WAS NEAR. TOO, *TOO* NEAR."

RRIPPP

WH -- ?

RIFF! RIFF, IT'S --

KUN-GO-RO!

"*KUNGORO!* THE *VERY* CREATURE WE'D COME HERE TO HUNT! *KUNGORO -- MONSTER OF THE SNOWS!*

"HIS *ROAR* SHOOK THE FRAGILE TENTS. HIS *HOT BREATH* STUNG OUR EYES! AND HE WAS *FAST* -- FASTER THAN I'D HAVE BELIEVED *POSSIBLE!*"

U-HHH!

"I SAW ONE *MASSIVE, HAIRY PAW* ROCKETING MY WAY, AND THEN NOTHING -- BUT AN *ALL-ENCOMPASSING DARKNESS!*"

KUN-GO-RO!

"IT WOULD BE ***HOURS*** BEFORE I AWOKE. AND WHEN I DID..."

RIFF! RIFF!

E-EASY, JUNE. I'M HERE.

WHERE'S ***DOC?***

OH, ***RIFF!*** THAT H-HORRIBLE THING -- IT ***KILLED*** HIM!

DOC -- ***DEAD?***

YOU ***KNOW,*** JUNE, DOC -- HE WOULDN'T HAVE ***MINDED*** THIS.

THIS IS HOW HE ***LIVED*** HIS LIFE -- PITTING ***HUMAN INGENUITY*** AND ***GUTS*** AGAINST THE UNKNOWN -- AND HE WANTED TO ***GO OUT*** LIKE THIS, FIGHTING TO THE END.

FOR ME, ***I*** WOULDN'T MIND SO MUCH, EITHER --

-- BUT IT'D BE A ***HORRIBLE FATE*** FOR A WOMAN -- FOR ***YOU*** --

-- SO WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND ***ANOTHER WAY!***

KUN-GO-

"I ALREADY HAD ***IDEAS*** ON HOW TO FELL THE BEAST. STRANGE ***PLANTS*** IT AVOIDED, THAT MIGHT BE ***TOXIC*** TO IT. SLIP SOME INTO ITS FOOD, AND..."

KZAKK

HM?

OH, RIFF!

WHAT -- ?

I --

I DON'T --

"IT WAS WHAT THE RADIO HAD BEEN *TALKING* ABOUT --"

DO NOT *FEAR*, RIFF BORKUM! THE DANGER IS AT AN *END*. RESCUE TEAMS HAVE BEEN *ALERTED* AND ARE ON THEIR WAY!

YEAH, SO JUST *KICK BACK*, AN' WATCH THE *SHOW!*

RIFF...?

"WEEKS LATER, WE PULLED INTO ***NEW YORK HARBOR,*** THE PRESERVED BODY OF KUNGORO IN TOW. THERE WAS A ***CROWD*** WAITING FOR US.

"WE ***KNEW*** THE DRILL. THEY'D WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE ***BEAST,*** ABOUT DOC'S DEATH, OUR ***ORDEAL*** --"

RIFF!

RIFF, OVER ***HERE!***

RIFF ***BORKUM!***

"OR SO WE ***THOUGHT.***"

DID YOU ***SEE*** THEM?

DID YOU ***MEET*** THEM?

WHAT DID THEY ***SAY*** TO YOU? HOW DID THEY ***ACT?***

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE ***FIRST*** PEOPLE RESCUED BY THE ***TOMORROWERS*** -- THE WORLD'S NEWEST ***WONDERS?***

"THE ***TOMORROWERS.*** SIMON, NICKY AND VIV. THAT WAS JUST BEFORE THEY PUT UP THE CRYSTAL ***TOMORROWSPIRE,*** DOMINATING THE HARBOR.

"AND THEY WERE ONLY THE ***FIRST.***

"THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY ***MORE*** SINCE THEN. THE ***NEO-KNIGHTS, HALF-CAT, OVERDRIVE,*** THE ***INSIDE MEN,*** THAT BLASTED ***SUPERSTAR...***

"ONCE, THE WONDERS WERE THE ***FRONTIER,*** THE ***UNKNOWN.*** AND HEROES SHOWED WHAT MANKIND COULD ***DO.*** BUT NOW..."

...NOW THE WONDERS *ARE* THE HEROES. SAVING EARTH FROM *DESPOTS*, ALIEN RACES AND *MORE*.

AND MANKIND...

SHADY REST RETIREMENT VILLAGE

...MANKIND JUST *WATCHES*.

AND SOMETIMES *APPLAUDS*.

MISTER BORKUM, YOU REALLY *DO* NEED TO TAKE YOUR AFTERNOON PILLS...

IT'S ALL *GONE*.

JUNE *LEFT* ME, YOU KNOW.

FOR ALL HER FRETTING, IT WAS THE *ADRENALINE* THAT KEPT US TOGETHER.

MISTER BORKUM...

PEOPLE DON'T KNOW, NURSE!

AHHH!

THEY DON'T *KNOW* WHAT'S BEEN *LOST!* WHAT MAY *NEVER* BE ABLE TO BE *RECOVERED!*

MISTER BORKUM!

SORRY. *SORRY.*

YOU HAVE TO *STOP* THAT. THE OTHER NURSES WON'T WANT TO *DEAL* WITH YOU IF YOU KEEP... *RAVING* LIKE THAT!

YOU HAVE SUCH ***LOVELY*** SOUVENIRS. ALL SO STRANGE AND ***EXOTIC***, LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A ***SATURN FIVE*** ADVENTURE.

YOU MUST HAVE SEEN ***SO MUCH*** IN YOUR TIME, SIR.

I'LL SEND SOMEONE IN TO ***DUST*** THEM, SHALL I?

"***DONE*** SO MUCH. NOT JUST SEEN.

"I'VE ***DONE*** SO MUCH."

BUT YOU DON'T ***UNDERSTAND***, DO YOU?

NONE OF YOU UNDERSTAND. THAT WORLD -- IT'S GONE, GONE ***FOREVER***. AND IT WAS SO -- SO --

TOMORROWERS MISSION ONE: SAVING THE HELPLESS EXPLORERS!

AND ***NOW...***

NOW YOU WATCH ***BRIGHT, COLORFUL FIGURES*** WHEEL AND GLOW AND ***DOGFIGHT*** IN THE AFTERNOON SUN...

...WHILE I ***WEEP*** FOR THE END OF THE ***WORLD.***

KAREN, ***LOOK!***

MOONRUNNER -- HE MUST BE FIGHTING THE ***D-RANGERS*** AGAIN!

THE END

ALASKA. 1961.

The Hydra and the Lion

YOU KNEW HIM A LONG TIME?

OH HELL, SON, BACK TO THE DAYS A' THE STUBBY LEWIS CIRCUS. YOU REMEMBER THAT ONE? NAH. BEFORE YOUR TIME.

BACK THEN HE WAS GOIN' BY THE NAME *STROMO*.

ENTRANCE

KANSAS CITY. 1929.

I GOT TIRED A' THAT LIFE. COME UP HERE IN '36. HE FOLLOWED A COUPLE YEARS LATER.

WE WORKED THE FISHIN' BOATS TOGETHER TILL WE BOTH JUST... WORE OUT.

HE WAS A NICE FELLA. DUMB AS A BLOCK A' WOOD BUT STRONG AS A BUNCH A' ELEPHANTS.

LAST FEW YEARS HE WAS WORKIN' UP AT THE HIGH SCHOOL, PUSHIN' A BROOM. THE KIDS LOVED HIM.

YEAH, A REAL NICE FELLA.

HERCULES

HIS CHOICEST PRIZE

ETERNAL PEACE

HERCULES.

YEAH.

MADE ME PROMISE TO PUT HIS PROPER NAME ON HIS TOMBSTONE. SAID HE'D MADE A LOT OF ENEMIES OVER THE YEARS, HAD TO HIDE OUT, USE THE MADE-UP NAMES.

THE *REAL* HERCULES.

YEAH, I DUNNO.

WHO KNOWS ?

WE HAD A NICE LITTLE FUNERAL FOR HIM. THEN THIS FOG ROLLED IN...

THEN THE MONSTER.

SHOWED UP THE SAME DAY THEY PUT UP THE TOMBSTONE. SCARED THE HELL OUTTA PEOPLE.

IT HASN'T HURT ANY-BODY?

NAH. DOESN'T REALLY MOVE AROUND MUCH.

YOU SURE IT'S ALIVE?

IT WAS MAKIN' NOISE YESTERDAY. I HAVEN'T CHECKED ON IT YET TODAY.

SQUEEEEEEE

!

WHAT'S THAT?

GUESS THAT'S NOT THE NOISE YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT.

HEY, I GOT AN IDEA. I DON'T WANT TO GET IN YOUR WAY, SO I'LL WAIT HERE.

KEEP GOIN' STRAIGHT. YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

YOU NEED ANY HELP, YOU CALL ME.

SURE.

SQUEEEEEEEEEEEEE--

POP

SON OF A--

SHHHH.

HE'S SLEEPING.

KID!

GET DOWN FROM THERE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M GETTING TEETH FOR MY COLLECTION.

DO YOU WANT TO SEE MY--

COMEHERE!

YOU TRYING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED?!

YOU LIVE AROUND HERE? WHERE ARE YOUR PARENTS?

I'M FROM CITHAERON. YOU KNOW WHERE THAT IS?

WHAT?

YOU WANT TO SEE MY COLLECTION?

KID--

I HAVE AN IRON FEATHER, A BRONZE HOOF, AND A HAIR FROM A THREE-HEADED DOG. I HAVE A PIECE OF SILVER EGGSHELL AND HALF A GOLDEN APPLE, A STONE THAT FELL FROM THE SKY, AND A DROP OF CENTAUR'S BLOOD.

I ALSO HAVE THE TEARS Pprincess MAGARA SHED FOR HER MURDERED SONS.

?

GO HOME.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'M HALF LION.

THAT'S GREAT, NOW GET--

I CAN PROVE IT!

GRRRRRRRRR

RAARR

JEEZ, KID! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO--

AH CRAP.

YOU SAID A BAD WORD.

URRCOOOONK
QUIET, YOU!
OOH!
THE HYDRA!
RONK
RONK
RONK
THAT'S SOME-THING.
YOU GUYS LOOK FAKE.

MOM

DAMN.

RONK ONK ONK

!

HEY!

AH!

AHHHHH

HELLBOY?

GRRR

RAARRR

CHOMP

RAARRR

SPLOOSH

KID?

...

SO WHERE DO *YOU* THINK THAT LION CAME FROM?

UH...

THAT WASN'T TOO BAD.

LET ME MAKE A PHONE CALL AND THE BUREAU* WILL SEND SOME GUYS OUT TO PICK THAT UP.

HUK

ACK

AACK

OKAY.

YOU DIDN'T BY ANY CHANCE SEE A LITTLE GIRL GO BY?

OR A LION?

UH. NO.

WHAT?

NEVER MIND.

*BUREAU FOR PARANORMAL RESEARCH AND DEFENSE

SIXTEEN HOURS LATER. B.P.R.D. HEADQUARTERS, FAIRFIELD, CT.

FASCINATING.

THE GIRL SAID SHE WAS FROM CITHAERON...

"ACCORDING TO LEGEND, HERCULES, AT EIGHTEEN, WENT ALONE INTO THE WOODS OF CITHAERON AND KILLED THE THESPIAN LION..."

AND FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, HE WORE ITS SKIN.

YOU THINK THE LITTLE GIRL WAS THE GHOST OF HIS PANTS?

CLOAK, HELLBOY. HE WORE THE SKIN AS A CLOAK.

STILL...

IT'S A GOOD THEORY, PROFESSOR, BUT IF I MIGHT SUGGEST SOMETHING...

SHE REFERRED TO MAGARA, WHO WAS HERCULES' WIFE. HERCULES KILLED HIS WIFE AND SONS WHILE DRIVEN MAD BY HERA. THE FEATHERS, APPLES, AND HOOVES REFER TO THE LABORS OF HERCULES, BUT HIS ***FIRST*** LABOR, UNDERTAKEN TO ATONE FOR THOSE MURDERS, WAS TO SLAY THE ***NEMEAN*** LION.

I THINK IT MOST LIKELY THAT THE CHILD WAS ACTUALLY A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF HERCULES' UNRESOLVED GUILT.

OY!

HERCULES

THE END

A Tropical Horror

by WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

ILLUSTRATIONS *by* GARY GIANNI

We are a hundred and thirty days out from Melbourne, and for three weeks we have lain in this sweltering calm.

It is midnight, and our watch on deck until four a.m. I go out and sit on the hatch. A minute later, Joky, our youngest 'prentice, joins me for a chatter. Many are the hours we have sat thus and talked in the night watches; though, to be sure, it is Joky who does the talking. I am content to smoke and listen, giving an occasional grunt at seasons to show that I am attentive.

Joky has been silent for some time, his head bent in meditation. Suddenly he looks up, evidently with the intention of making some remark. As he does so, I see his face stiffen with a nameless horror. He crouches back, his eyes staring past me at some unseen fear. Then his mouth opens. He gives forth a

stranglulated cry and topples backward off the hatch, striking his head against the deck. Fearing I know not what, I turn to look.

Great Heavens! Rising above the bulwarks, seen plainly in the bright moonlight, is a vast slobbering mouth a fathom across. From the huge dripping lips hang great tentacles. As I look the Thing comes further over the rail. It is rising, rising, higher and higher. There are no eyes visible; only that fearful slobbering mouth set on the tremendous trunk-like neck; which, even as I watch, is curling inboard with the stealthy celerity of an enormous eel. Over it comes in vast heaving folds. Will it never end? The ship gives a slow, sullen roll to starboard as she feels the weight. Then the tail, a broad, flat-shaped mass, slips over the teak rail and falls with a loud slump on to the deck.

For a few seconds the hideous creature lies heaped in writhing, slimy coils. Then, with quick, darting movements, the monstrous head travels along the deck. Close by the main-mast stand the harness casks, and alongside of these a freshly opened cask of salt beef with the top loosely replaced. The smell of the meat seems to attract the monster, and I can hear it sniffing with a vast indrawing breath. Then those lips open, displaying four huge fangs; there is a quick forward motion of the head, a sudden crashing, crunching sound, and beef and barrel have disappeared. The noise brings one of the ordinary seamen out of the fo'cas'le. Coming into the night, he can see nothing for a moment. Then, as he gets further aft, he sees, and with horrified cries rushes forward. Too late! From the mouth of the Thing there flashes forth a long, broad blade of glistening white, set with fierce teeth. I avert my eyes, but cannot shut out the sickening "Glut! Glut!" that follows.

The man on the look-out, attracted by the disturbance, has witnessed the tragedy, and flies for refuge into the fo'cas'le, flinging to the heavy iron door after him.

The carpenter and sailmaker come running out from the halfdeck in their drawers. Seeing the awful Thing, they rush aft to the cabins with shouts of fear. The Second Mate, after one glance over the break of the poop, runs down the companion-way with the Helmsman after him. I can hear them barring the scuttle, and abruptly I realise that I am on the main-deck alone.

So far I have forgotten my own danger. The past few minutes seem like a portion of an awful dream. Now, however, I comprehend my position and, shaking off the horror that has held me, turn to seek safety. As I do so my eyes fall upon Joky, lying huddled and senseless with fright where he has fallen. I cannot leave him there. Close by stands the empty half-deck—a little steel-built house with iron doors. The lee one is hooked open. Once inside I am safe.

Up to the present the Thing has seemed to be unconsious of my presence. Now, however, the huge barrel-like head sways in my direction; then comes a muffled bellow, and the great tongue flickers in and out as the brute turns and swirls aft to meet me. I know there is not a moment to lose, and, picking up the helpless lad, I make a run for the open door. It is only distant a few yards, but that awful shape is coming down the deck to me in great wreathing coils. I reach the house and tumble in with my burden; then out on deck again to unhook and close the door. Even as I do so something white curls around the end of the house. With a bound I am inside and the door is shut and bolted. Through the thick glass of the ports I see the Thing sweep round

the house, in vain search for me.

Joky has not moved yet; so, kneeling down, I loosen his shirt collar and sprinkle some water from the breaker over his face. While I am doing this I hear Morgan shout something; then comes a great shriek of terror, and again that sickening "Glut! Glut!" Joky stirs uneasily, rubs his eyes, and sits up suddenly.

"Was that Morgan shouting—?" He breaks off with a cry. "Where are we? I have had such awful dreams!"

At this instant that is a sound of running footsteps on the deck and I hear Morgan's voice at the door.

"Tom, open—!"

He stops abruptly and gives an awful cry of despair. Then I hear him rush forward. Through the porthole, I see him spring into the fore rigging and scramble madly aloft. Something steals up after him. It shows white in the moonlight. It wraps itself around his right ankle. Morgan stops dead, plucks out his sheath-knife, and hacks fiercely at the fiendish thing. It lets go, and in a second he is over the top and running for dear life up the t'gallant rigging.

A time of quietness follows, and presently I see that the day is breaking. Not a sound can be heard save the heavy gasping breathing of the Thing. As the sun rises higher the creature stretches itself out along the deck and seems to enjoy the warmth. Still no sound, either from the men forward or the officers aft. I can only suppose that they are afraid of attracting its attention. Yet, a little later, I hear the report of a pistol away aft, and looking out I see the serpent raise its huge head as though listening. As it does so I get a good view of the fore part, and in the daylight see what the night has hidden.

There, right about the mouth, is a pair of little pig-eyes, that seem to twinkle with a diabolical intelligence. It is swaying its head slowly from side to side; then, without any warning, it turns quickly and looks right through the port. I dodge out of sight; but not soon enough. It has seen me, and it brings its great mouth up against the glass.

I hold my breath. My God! If it breaks the glass! I cower, horrified. From the direction of the port there comes a loud, harsh, scraping sound. I shiver. Then I remember that there are little iron doors to shut over the ports in bad weather. Without a moment's waste of time I rise to my feet and slam to the door over the port. Then I go round to the others and do the same. We are now in darkness, and I tell Joky in a whisper to light the lamp, which, after some fumbling, he does.

About an hour before midnight I fall asleep. I am awakened suddenly some hours later by a scream of agony and the rattle of a water-dipper. There

is a slight scuffling sound; then that soul-revolting "Glut!Glut!"

I guess what has happened. One of the men forrad has slipped out of the fo'cas'le to try and get a little water. Evidently he has trusted to the darkness to hide his movements. Poor beggar! He has paid for his attempt with his life!

After this I cannot sleep, though the rest of the night passes quietly enough. Towards morning I doze a bit, but wake every few minutes with a start. Joky is sleeping peacefully; indeed, he seems worn out with the terrible strain of the past twenty-four hours. About eight a.m. I call him, and we make a light breakfast off the dry ship's biscuit and water. Of the latter happily we have a good supply. Joky seems more himself, and starts to talk a little—possibly somewhat louder than what is safe; for, as he chatters on, wondering how it will end, there comes a tremendous blow against the side of the house, making it ring again. After this Joky is very silent. As we sit there I cannot

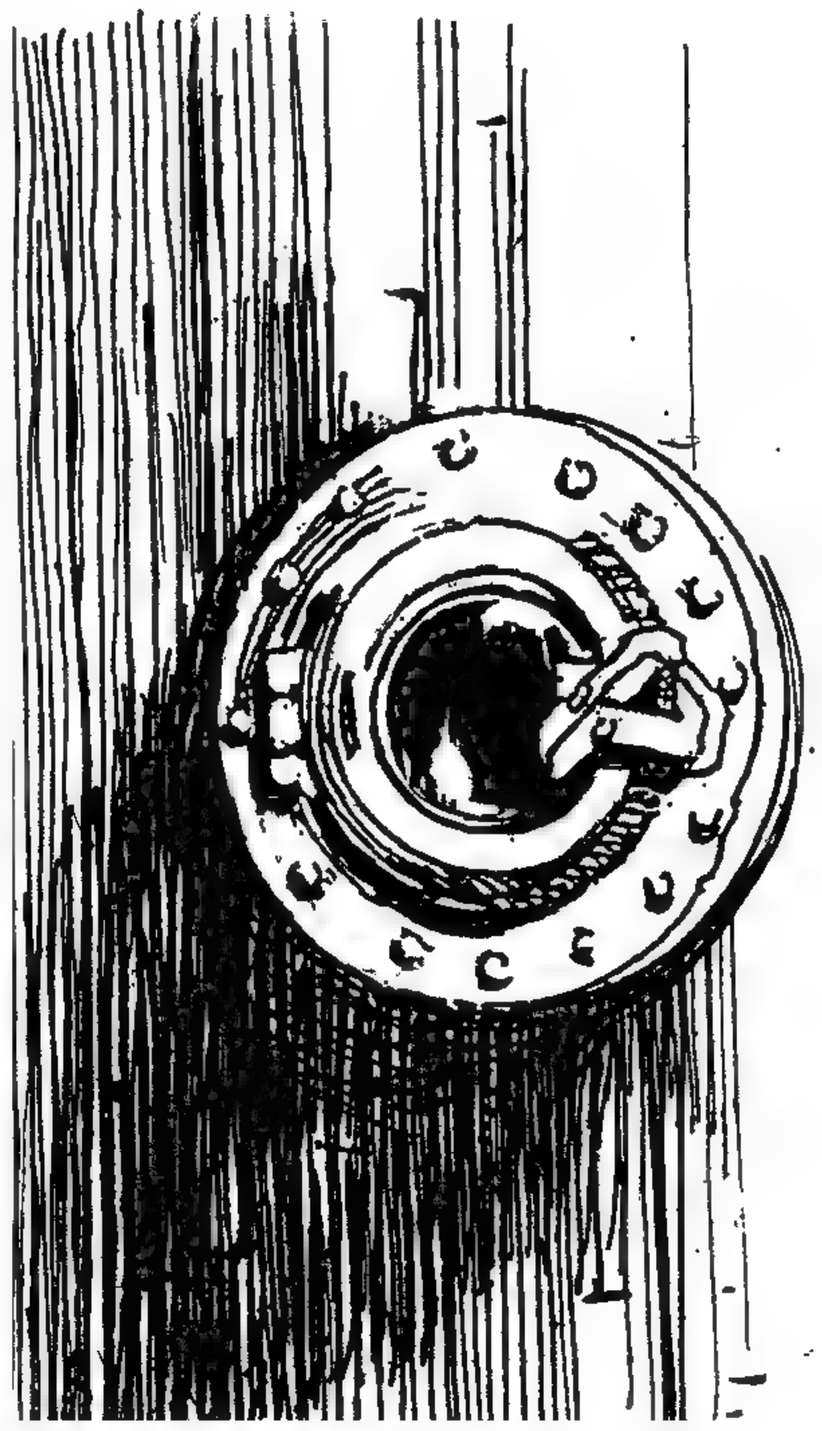
but wonder what all the rest are doing, and how the poor beggars forrad are faring, cooped up without water, as the tragedy of the night has proved.

Towards noon, I hear a loud bang, followed by a terrific bellowing. Then comes a great smashing of woodwork, and the cries of men in pain. Vainly I ask myself what has happened. I begin to reason. By the sound of the report it was evidently something much heavier than a rifle or pistol, and judging from the mad roaring of the Thing, the shot must have done some execution. On thinking it over further, I become convinced that, by some means, those aft have got hold of the small signal cannon we carry, and though I know that some have been hurt, perhaps killed, yet a feeling of exhultation seizes me as I listen to the roars of the Thing, and realise that it is badly wounded, perhaps mortally. After a while, however, the bellowing dies away, and only an occasional roar, denoting more of anger than aught else, is heard.

Presently I become aware, by the ship's canting over to starboard, that the creature has gone over to that side, and a great hope springs up within me that possibly it has had enough of us and is going over the rail into the sea. For a time all is silent and my hope grows stronger. I lean across and nudge Joky, who is sleeping with his head on the table. He starts up sharply with a loud cry.

"Hush!" I whisper hoarsely. "I'm not certain, but I do believe it's gone."

Joky's face brightens wonderfully, and he questions me eagerly. We wait another hour or so, with hope ever rising. Our confidence is returning fast. Not a sound can we hear, not even the breathing of the Beast. I get out some biscuits, and Joky, after rummaging in the locker, produces a small piece of pork and a bottle of ship's vinegar. We fall to with a relish. After our long abstinence from food the meal acts on us like wine, and what must Joky do but insist on opening the door, to make sure the Thing has gone. This I will not allow, telling him that at least it will be safer to open the iron port-covers first and have a look out. Joky argues, but I am immovable. He becomes excited. I believe the youngster is light-headed. Then, as I turn to unscrew one of the



after-covers, Joky makes a dash at the door. Before he can undo the bolts I have him, and after a short struggle lead him back to the table. Even as I endeavour to quieten him there comes at the starboard door—the door that Joky has tried to open—a sharp, loud sniff, sniff, followed immediately by a thunderous grunting howl and a foul stench of putrid breath sweeps in under the door. A great trembling takes me, and were it not for the Carpenter's tool-chest I should fall. Joky turns very white and is violently sick, after which he is seized by a hopeless fit of sobbing.

Hour after hour passes, and, weary to death, I lie down on the chest upon which I have been sitting, and try to rest.

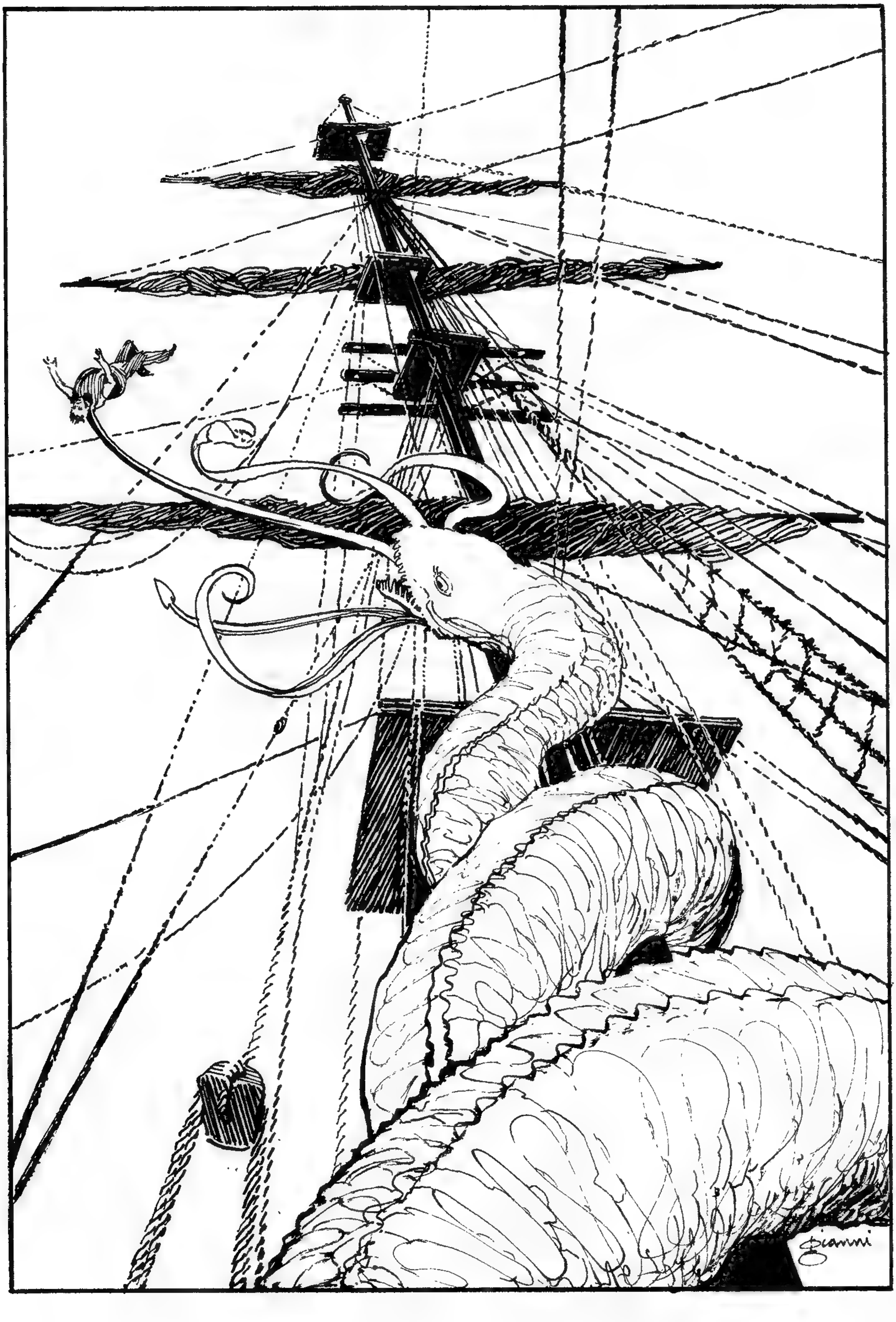
It must be about half-past two in the morning, after a somewhat longer doze, that I am awakened by a most tremendous uproar away forrad—men's voices shrieking, cursing, praying; but in spite of the terror expressed, so weak and feeble; while in the midst, and at times broken off short with that hellishly suggestive "Glut! Glut!" is the unearthly bellowing of the Thing. Fear incarnate seizes me, and I can only fall on my knees and pray. Too well I know what is happening.

Joky has slept through it all, and I am thankful.

Presently, under the door there steals a narrow ribbon of light, and I know that the day has broken on the second morning of our imprisonment. I let Joky sleep on. I will let him have peace while he may. Time passes, but I take little notice. The Thing is quiet, probably sleeping. About midday I eat a little biscuit and drink some of the water. Joky still sleeps. It is best so.

A sound breaks the stillness. The ship gives a slight heave, and I know that once more the Thing is awake. Round the deck it moves, causing the ship to roll perceptibly. Once it goes forrad—I fancy to again explore the fo'cas'le. Evidently it finds nothing, for it returns almost immediately. It pauses a moment at the house, then goes on further aft. Up aloft, somewhere in the fore-rigging, there rings out a peal of wild laughter, though sounding very faint and far away. The Horror stops suddenly. I listen intently, but hear nothing save a sharp creaking beyond the after end of the house, as though a strain had come upon the rigging.

A minute later I hear a cry aloft, followed almost instantly by a loud crash on deck that seems to shake the ship. I wait in anxious fear. What is happening? The minutes pass slowly. Then comes another frightened shout. It ceases suddenly. The suspense has become terrible, and I am no longer able to bear it. Very cautiously I open one of the after port-covers, and peep out to see a fearful sight. There, with its tail upon the deck and its vast body curled round the main-mast, is the monster, its head above the top-sail yard, and its great claw-armed tentacle waving in the air. It is the first proper sight that I have had of the Thing. Good Heavens! It must weigh a hundred tons!


Bianni

Knowing that I shall have time, I open the port itself then crane my head out and look up. There on the extreme end of the lower top-sail yard I see one of the able seamen. Even down here I note the staring horror of his face. At this moment he sees me and gives a weak, hoarse cry for help. I can do nothing for him. As I look the great tongue shoots out and licks him off the yard, much as might a dog a fly off the window-pane.

Higher still, but happily out of reach, are two more of the men. As far as I can judge they are lashed to the mast above the royal yard. The Thing attempts to reach them, but after a futile effort it ceases, and starts to slide down, coil on coil, to the deck. While doing this I notice a great gaping wound on its body some twenty feet above the tail.

I drop my gaze from aloft and look aft. The cabin door is torn from its hinges, and the bulkhead—which, unlike the half-deck, is of teak wood—is partly broken down. With a shudder I realise the cause of those cries after the cannon-shot. Turning I screw my head round and try to see the foremast, but cannot. The sun, I notice, is low, and the night is near. Then I draw in my head and fasten up both port and cover.

How will it end? Oh! how will it end?

After a while Joky wakes up. He is very restless, yet though he has eaten nothing during the day I cannot get him to touch anything.

Night draws on. We are too weary—too dispirited to talk. I lie down, but not to sleep . . . Time passes.

A ventilator rattles violently somewhere on the main-deck, and there sounds constantly that slurring, gritty noise. Later I hear a cat's agonised howl, and then again all is quiet. Some time after comes a great splash alongside. Then, for some hours all is silent as the grave. Occasionally I sit up on the chest and listen, yet never a whisper of noise comes to me. There is an absolute silence, even the monotonous creak of the gear has died away entirely, and at last a real hope is springing up within me. That splash, this silence—surely I am justified in hoping. I do not wake Joky this time. I will prove first for myself that all is safe. Still I wait. I will run no unnecessary risks. After a time I creep to the after-port and will listen; but there is no sound. I put up my hand and feel at the screw, then again I hesitate, yet not for long. Noiselessly I begin to unscrew the fastening of the heavy shield. It swings loose on its hinge, and I pull it back and peer out. Perhaps the moon has gone behind a cloud. Suddenly a beam of moonlight enters through the port, and goes as quickly. I stare out. Something moves. Again the light streams in, and now I seem to be looking into a great cavern, at the bottom of which quivers and curls something palely white.

My heart seems to stand still! It is the Horror! I start back and seize the iron port-flap to slam it to. As I do so, something strikes the glass like a steam

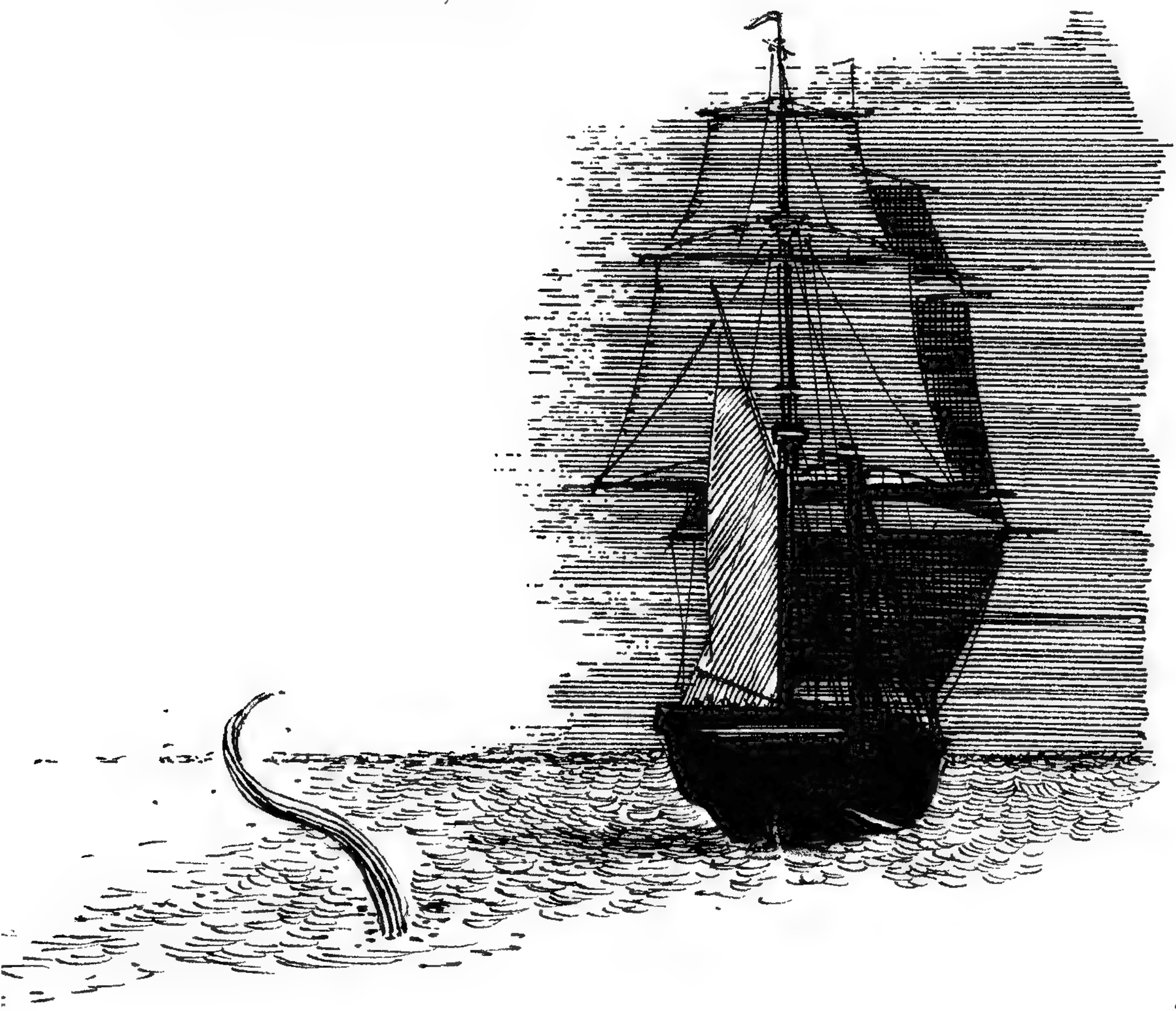
ram, shatters it to atoms, and flicks past me into the berth. I scream and spring away. The port is quite filled with it. The lamp shows it dimly. It is curling and twisting here and there. It is as thick as a tree and covered with a smooth slimy skin. At the end is a great claw, like a lobster's, only a thousand times larger. I cower down into the farthest corner . . . It has broken the tool-chest to pieces with one click of those frightful mandibles. Joky has crawled under a bunk. The Thing sweeps round in my direction. I feel a drop of sweat trickle slowly down my face—it tastes salty. Nearer comes that awful death . . . Crash! I roll over backwards. It has crushed the water breaker against which I leant, and I am rolling in the water across the floor. The claw drives up, then down, with a quick uncertain movement, striking the deck a dull, heavy blow, a foot from my head. Joky gives a little gasp of horror. Slowly the Thing rises and starts feeling its way round the berth. It plunges into a bunk and pulls out a bolster, nips it in half and drops it, then moves on. It is feeling along the deck. As it does so it comes across a half of the bolster. It seems to toy with it, then picks it up and takes it out through the port . . .

A wave of putrid air fills the berth. There is a grating sound, and something enters the port again—something white and tapering and set with teeth. Hither and thither it curls, rasping over the bunks, ceiling, and deck, with a noise like that of a great saw at work. Twice it flickers above my head, and I close my eyes. Then off it goes again. It sounds now on the opposite side of the berth and nearer to Joky. Suddenly the harsh, raspy noise becomes muffled, as though the teeth were passing across some soft substance. Joky gives a horrid little scream, that breaks off into a bubbling, whistling sound.

I open my eyes. The tip of the tongue is curled tightly round something that drips, then is quickly withdrawn, allowing the moonbeams to steal again into the berth. I rise to my feet. Looking round, I note a mechanical sort of way the wrecked state of the berth—the shattered chests, dismantled bunks, and something else—

"Joky!" I cry, and I tingle all over.

There is that awful Thing again at the port. I glance round for a weapon. I will revenge Joky. Ah! there, right under the lamp, where the wreck of the Carpenter's chest strews the floor, lies a small hatchet. I spring forward and seize it. It is small, but so keen—so keen! I feel its razor edge lovingly. Then I am back at the port. I stand to one side and raise my weapon. The great tongue is feeling its way to those fearsome remains. It reaches them. As it does so, with a scream of "Joky! Joky!" I strike savagely again and again and again, gasping as I strike; once more, and the monstrous mass falls to the deck, writhing like a hideous eel. A vast, warm flood rushes in through the porthole. There is a sound of breaking steel and an enormous bellowing. A singing comes in my ears and grows louder—louder. Then the berth grows indistinct and suddenly dark.



EXTRACT FROM THE LOG OF THE STEAMSHIP *HISPANOLA*.

June 24.–Lat–N. Long–W. 11 a.m.—Sighted four-masted barque about four points on the port bow, flying signal of distress. Ran down to her and sent a boat aboard. She proved to be the Glen Doon, homeward bound from Melbourne to London. Found things in a terrible state. Decks covered with blood and slime. Steel deckhouse stove in. Broke open door, and discovered youth of about nineteen in last stage of inanition, also part remains of boy about fourteen years of age. There was a great quantity of blood in the place, and a huge curled-up mass of whitish flesh, weighing about half a ton, one end of which appeared to have been hacked through with a sharp instrument. Found forecastle door open and hanging from one hinge. Doorway bulged, as though something had been forced through. Went inside. Terrible state of affairs, blood everywhere, broken chests, smashed bunks, but no men nor remains. Went aft again and found youth showing signs of recovery. When he came round, gave the name of Thompson. Said they had been attacked by a huge serpent–thought it must have been a sea serpent. He was too weak to say much, but told us there were some men up the main-mast. Sent a hand aloft, who reported them lashed to the royal mast, and quite dead. Went aft to the cabin. Here we found the bulkhead smashed to pieces, and the cabin-door lying on the deck near the after-hatch. Found body of Captain down lazarette, but no officers. Noticed amongst the wreckage part of the carriage of a small cannon. Came aboard again.

Have sent the Second Mate with six men to work her into port. Thompson is with us. He has written out his version of the affair. We certainly consider that the state of the ship, as we found her, bears out in every respect his story.

(Signed)

William Norton

William Norton (Master).

Tom Briggs

Tom Briggs (1st Mate).

PARIS, 1925.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. MARY AND ST. JOSEPH.

...COMPLETELY SEVERED! WHAT KIND OF ***MONSTER*** COULD HAVE HACKED OFF HER ***ARM*** LIKE THIS?

WELL, WHOEVER IT IS IS KEEPING BUSY. THIS IS WHAT... THE THIRD ONE THIS MONTH?

TO WEAVE A LOVER

ARVID NELSON AND JUAN FERREYRA

IT'S THE ***FOURTH.***

JOURNEYMAN PHYSICIAN JULIEN SAUNIÈRE.

JOURNEYMAN PHYSICIAN GENEVIEVE TOURNON.

OHHH...

I'M WORRIED ABOUT *DE BOELDIEU*, GEN.

OH? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE YOUNG VICOMTE?

WELL, HE *DISAPPEARED* FOR A FEW MONTHS, BUT HE KEPT WRITING ME. IT GOT *CREEPY*.

HE CLAIMED TO BE ONTO SOME KIND OF...MEDICAL *BREAKTHROUGH*.

THEN HE GOT *SPOOKED* OR SOMETHING, AND THE LETTERS STOPPED.

THAT'S WHEN THESE WEIRD AMPUTATION ATTACKS STARTED!

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

HE'S OUR *FRIEND*, JULIEN. YOU DON'T *HONESTLY* BELIEVE THE RUMORS ABOUT WHY HE LEFT THE GUILD...

THEN YESTERDAY I GET A LETTER, OUT OF NOWHERE.

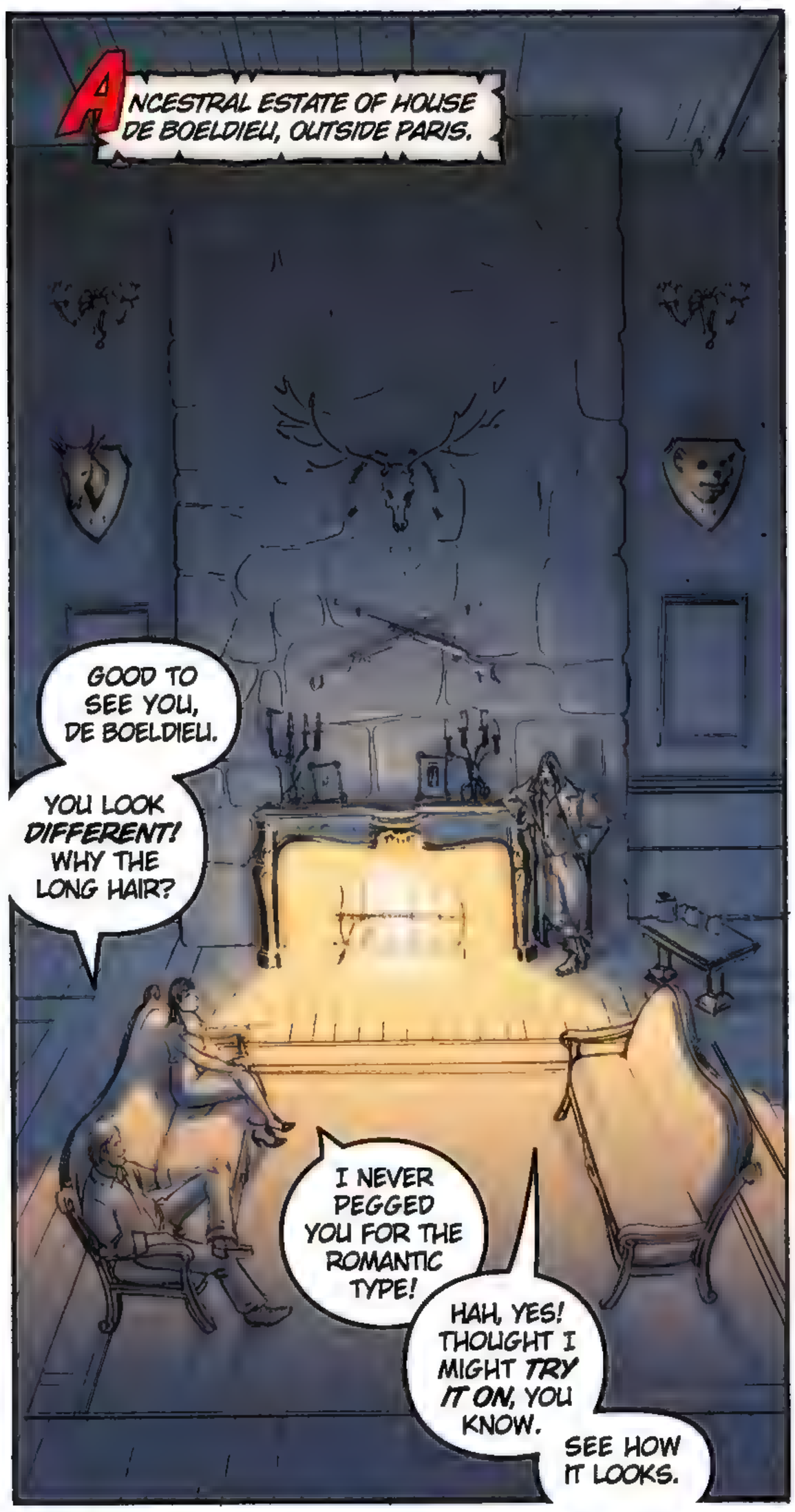
HE SAYS HE WAS JUST OVERWORKED! THAT I SHOULD IGNORE ALL THE EARLIER STUFF ABOUT *BREAKTHROUGHS* AND *DANGER*.

OKAY... SO HE WAS OVERWORKED.

NO. SOMETHING'S... NOT *RIGHT*.

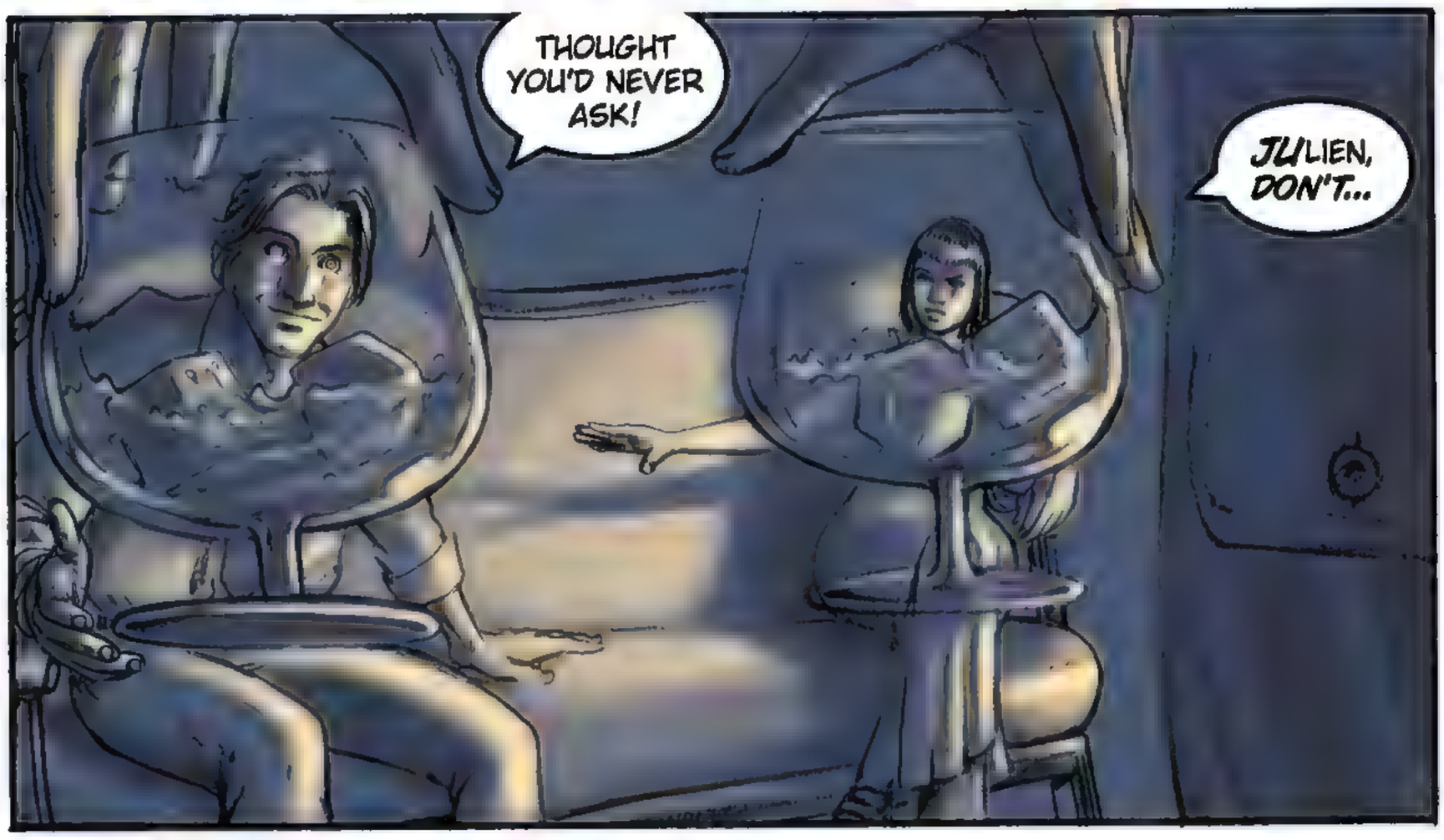
I ASKED TO SEE HIM, AND HE AGREED. ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

HE WANTS TO SEE *YOU*, TOO.


ANCESTRAL ESTATE OF HOUSE DE BOELDIEU, OUTSIDE PARIS.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, DE BOELDIEU.
YOU LOOK DIFFERENT! WHY THE LONG HAIR?
I NEVER PEGGED YOU FOR THE ROMANTIC TYPE!
HAH, YES! THOUGHT I MIGHT TRY IT ON, YOU KNOW.
SEE HOW IT LOOKS.

QUITE A COINCIDENCE, YOU WRITING! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SEE YOUR FACES!
MAY I... OFFER YOU SOME COGNAC?
JEAN-PIERRE DE BOELDIEU, 16TH VICOMTE DE BOELDIEU.

PLOOP!


THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK!
JULIEN, DON'T...

AH.

NO. THANK YOU.

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE *JULIEN* IS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

YES. I WAS...

SURPRISED BY THE ABRUPTNESS OF YOUR... LAST LETTER.

EVEN THE HANDWRITING SEEMED... STRANGE...

WHAT'S... GOING... ON... HERE...

I CAN EXPLAIN *EVERY*THING.

TINK!

DE BOELDIEU! WHAT ARE YOU--

FST HWUMP

DO-O-O-INGG...

AH! YOU'RE AWAKE.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO *DO* TO US, DE BOELDIEU?

VICOMTE DE BOELDIEU IS *DEAD.* BUT HE LIVES ON THROUGH ME.

HIS SON.

WHAT?

VICOMTE DE BOELDIEU *CREATED* ME. STITCHED ME TOGETHER FROM THE REFUSE OF CHARNEL HOUSES.

HE UNCOVERED THE DEEPEST SECRETS OF *LIFE* AND *DEATH!*

AND THE *HIGH MASTERS* OF YOUR *PHYSICIANS'* GUILD THOUGHT HE WAS MAD.

OH NO, OH GOD...

IN SOME WAYS DE BOELDIEU *WAS* A GOD. HE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING HE KNEW. ALL HIS *SECRETS.*

BUT I GET... *LONELY.*

GENEVIEVE? ISN'T THAT YOUR NAME? I SAW YOUR PICTURE AMONGST DE BOELDIEU'S EFFECTS.

HE... WOULDN'T LET ME HAVE YOU...

Y-YOUR FACE, YOU... YOU LOOK JUST *LIKE* HIM...

YES. I *KILLED* DE BOELDIEU. AND I *TOOK HIS FACE.*

I DON'T *FEEL* PAIN. I PERFORMED THE OPERATION MYSELF.

NOW *I* AM THE VICOMTE.

AND YOU. *YOU* WILL BE MY *BRIDE.*

K-CHUNK

!

WHRRRRR RRRRRR

MY GOD... THE *DISMEMBERMENTS!* ALL THOSE *PEOPLE!*

COME. THE PROCEDURE WORKS *MUCH* BETTER WITH FRESH TISSUE.

ALL THAT'S MISSING NOW...

...IS THE *HEAD!*

I *LOVE* YOU, GENEVIEVE! I NEED YOUR *HEAD!*

POP!

?!

COME NEAR ME AND I'LL SPLASH THIS ALL OVER MY FACE!

VITRIOLIC SPIRITS

VITRIOLIC SPIRITS: HYDROCHLORIC ACID.

NO!

D-DON'T! YOUR HEAD!

JULIEN, WAKE UP!

GEN? WHAT ARE WE...

NO! YOU CAN'T!

POP!

WE'RE LEAVING.

YOUR HEAD IS MINE!

YOU MAY NOT FEEL PAIN, BUT YOU STILL NEED EYES TO SEE!

SKAASH!

GAHHH!

GEN, WHAT THE HELL?!

YOUR HEAD IS MINE!

FWOOSH!

AHHHHHH!

AAAH-H-H-H!

WHAT HAPPENED? THAT *THING*...

DE BOELDIEU IS *DEAD*, ISN'T HE?

YEAH. IT'S A *LONG* STORY, JULIEN.

I NEED A DRINK.

WHAT?

Fin

GOBI DESERT.
19TH JUNE 1924.

GEORGINA, WE ARE **NOT** HERE "HUNTING DRAGONS."

IF YOU REALISED HOW ***IMPORTANT*** THIS FIND COULD BE, PERHAPS YOU WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO MAKE LIGHT OF IT.

BUT YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM DR. LAWRENCE IN TWO MONTHS! SURELY, **SOMEONE** SHOULD HAVE MET US AT THE BORDER?

DON'T WORRY, MRS. LAMPTON, TSAKHI WILL NOT DROP YOU.

YOU ARE IN SAFE HANDS.

YOU SEE MY DEAR--IT'S ALL HERE, JUST AS DR. LAWRENCE SAID. THE MOST EXCITING PALAEONTOLOGICAL FIND OF THE CENTURY.

FASCINATING, I'M SURE.

KRAKA-BOOM

ISN'T IT MAGNIFICENT! THE FIRST OF ITS KIND. I WONDER WHAT LAWRENCE WILL CALL IT?

CHARMING. WHERE *IS* DR. LAWRENCE, BRYAN?

The Horror Beneath

STORY
MOORE & REPPION

ART
TIMOTHY GREEN

COLORS
MICHELLE MADSEN

LETTERING
NATE PIEKOS

PROBABLY OFF CATALOGUING FINDS IN HIS TENT.

LOOKS AN ABSOLUTE CORKER OF A SITE.

YOU THERE! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? BLOODY FOOL!

HE DID NOTHING BUT GIBBER ABOUT MONSTERS THE WHOLE WAY HERE. CAN'T HE SEE IT'S ALREADY DEAD?

LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE LEFT IN A HURRY. MAYBE THE RESEARCH GRANT RAN OUT.

NOTHING MOVES A MAN OF SCIENCE QUICKER THAN FUNDING CUTS!

WHAT? HAVE THEY REALLY GONE? ARE WE ALONE HERE, BRYAN?

NOW IF I CAN JUST LAY MY HANDS ON A PARAFFIN LAMP...

COME ON, GEORGIE, WHERE'S YOUR PLUCK? THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. ***YOU'RE*** NOT AFRAID OF FOSSILS NOW TOO, ARE YOU?

NO...NOT FOSSILS.

WELL STOP BEING SILLY THEN. LAWRENCE IS JUST WORKING IN THE CAVES FOR ALL WE KNOW. THEN YOU'LL FEEL A CHUMP!

OF COURSE, HE MIGHT HAVE HAD THE SENSE TO GO TO NIISLEL KHUREE FOR THE RAINY SEASON. OR ULAN BATOR, OR WHATEVER THEY CALL IT NEXT.

I RATHER WISH ***WE*** HAD.

YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM DINOSAURS, GEORGIE. THEY'VE BEEN DEAD FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS. DEAD AND DRY AND GONE.

THESE DUSTY OLD BONES CAN'T HURT YOU.

I WONDER WHAT THESE HOLES ARE FOR.

BRYAN?

IT'S PROBABLY SOME DASHED CLEVER VENTILATION SCHEME.

LAWRENCE ALWAYS WAS A BLOODY CLEVER DICK.

MY GOD!

ALLGHOI KHORKHOI! TSAKHI WAS RIGHT!

RIGHT ABOUT WHAT? WHAT IS IT?

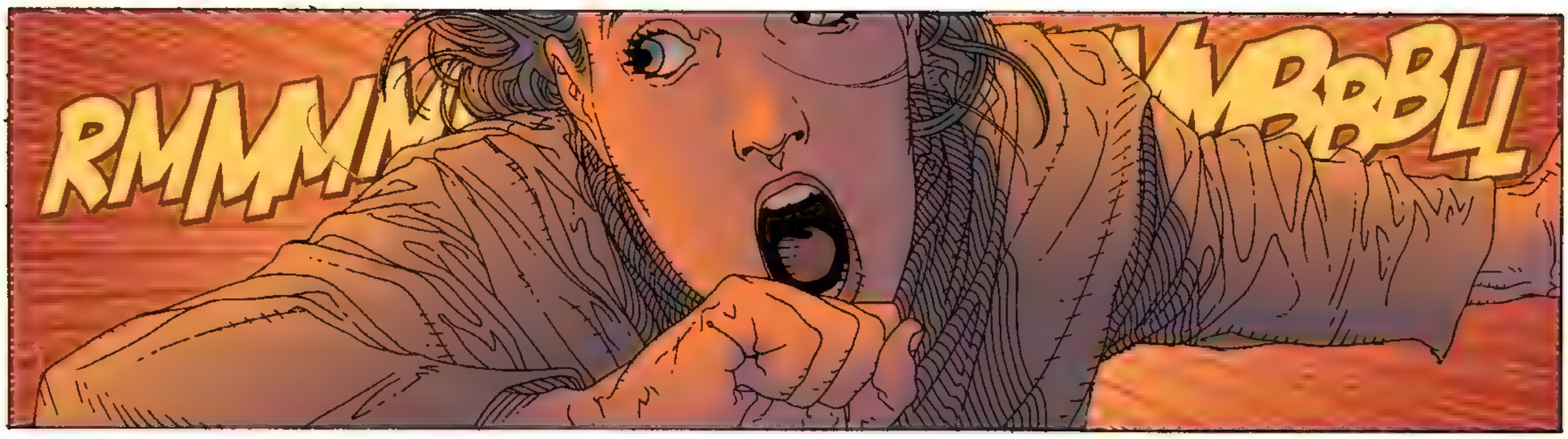
A DIRECT TRANSLATION FROM THE MONGOL WOULD BE "THE LIVING INTESTINE." I-I THINK WE'D BETTER GO BACK...

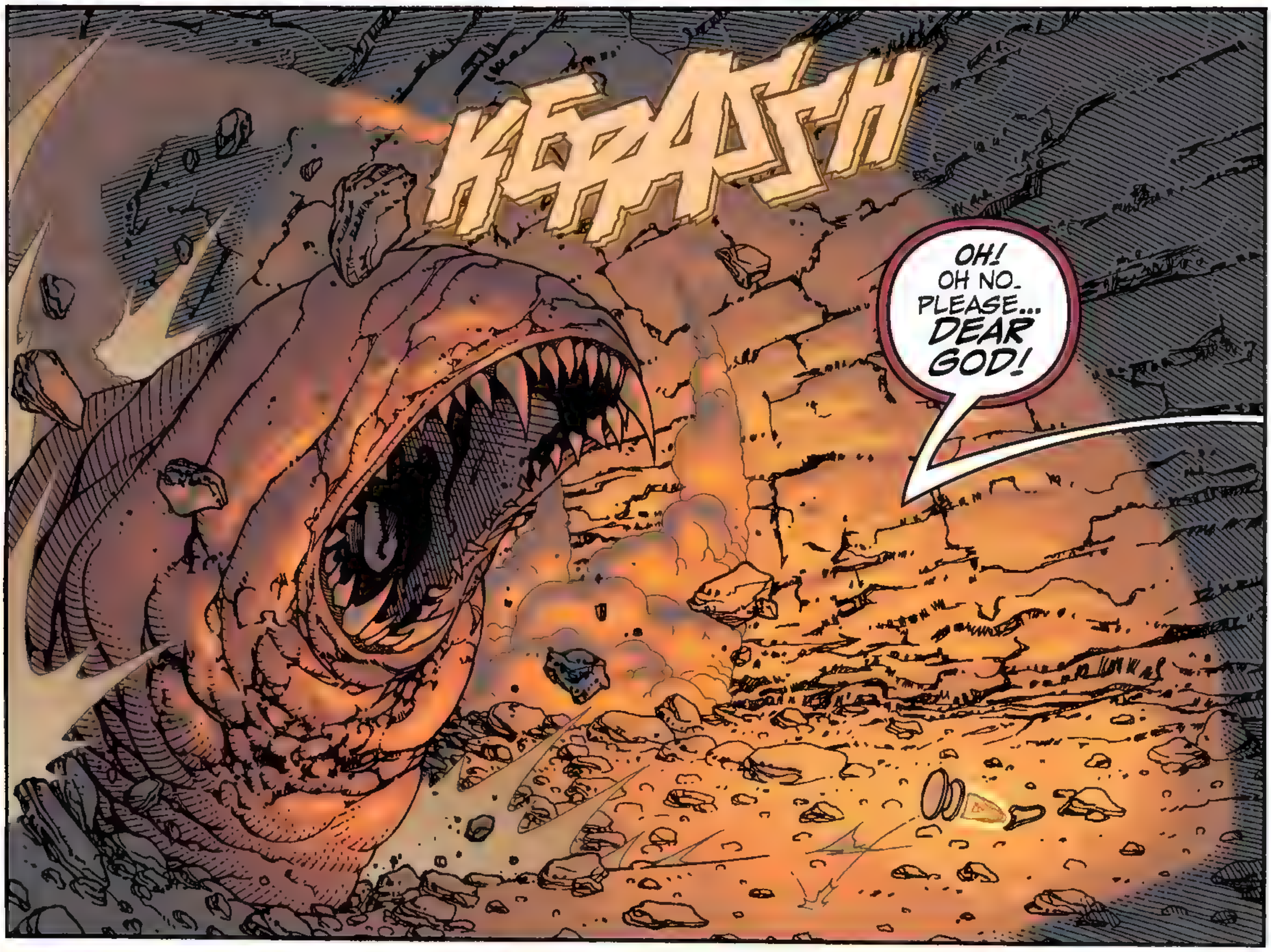
RRRMMBLL

RMMBL

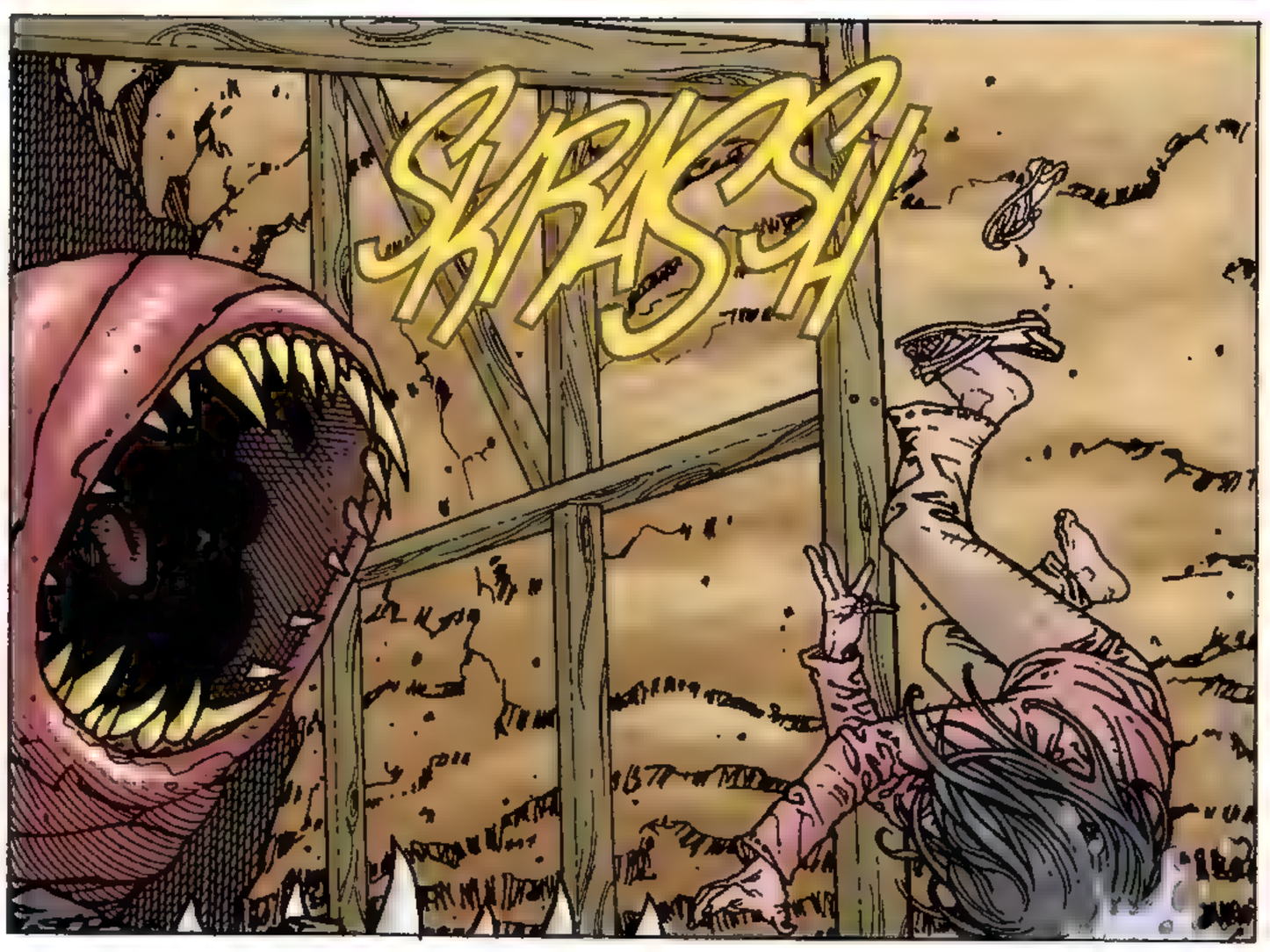
LAWRENCE MUST HAVE DISTURBED THE GHASTLY CREATURES. POOR CHAP.

GAAHH!

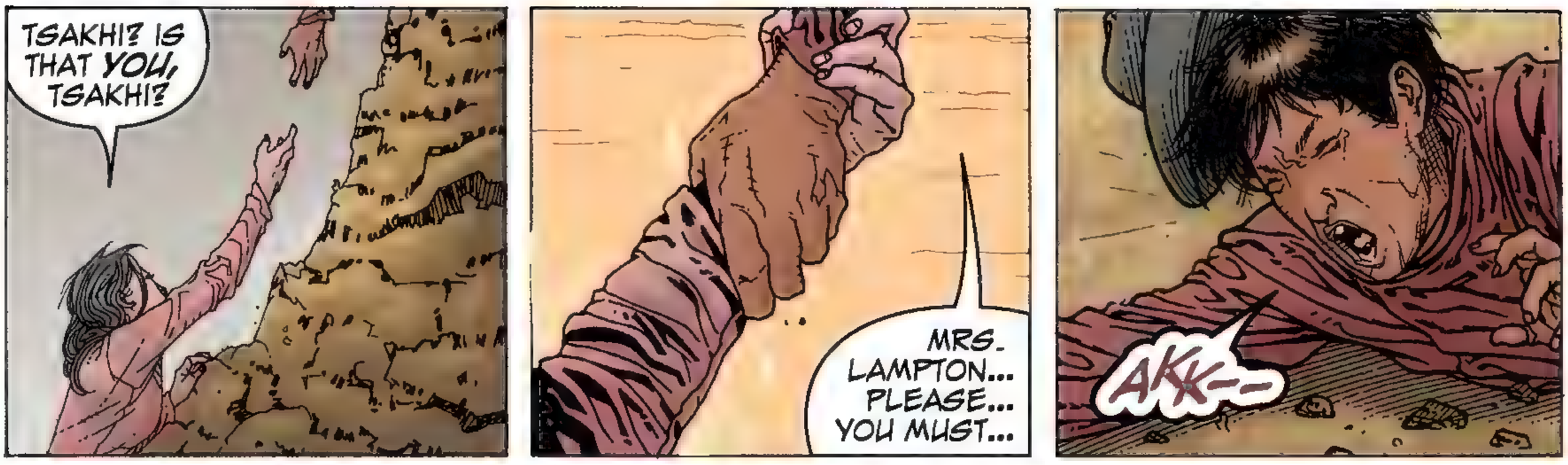

RMMMM
VRRRLL

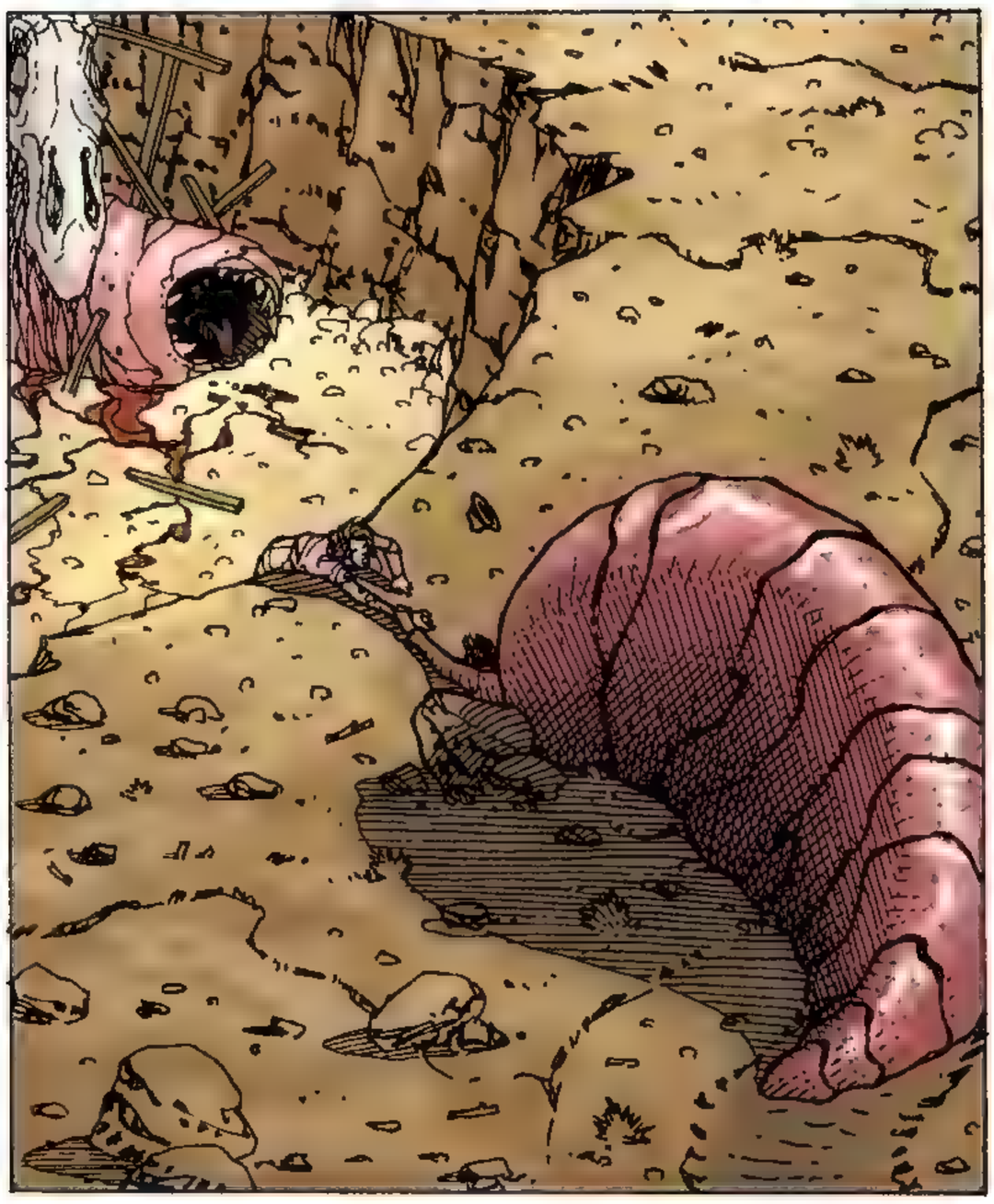

KRRASH
OH! OH NO. PLEASE... DEAR GOD!

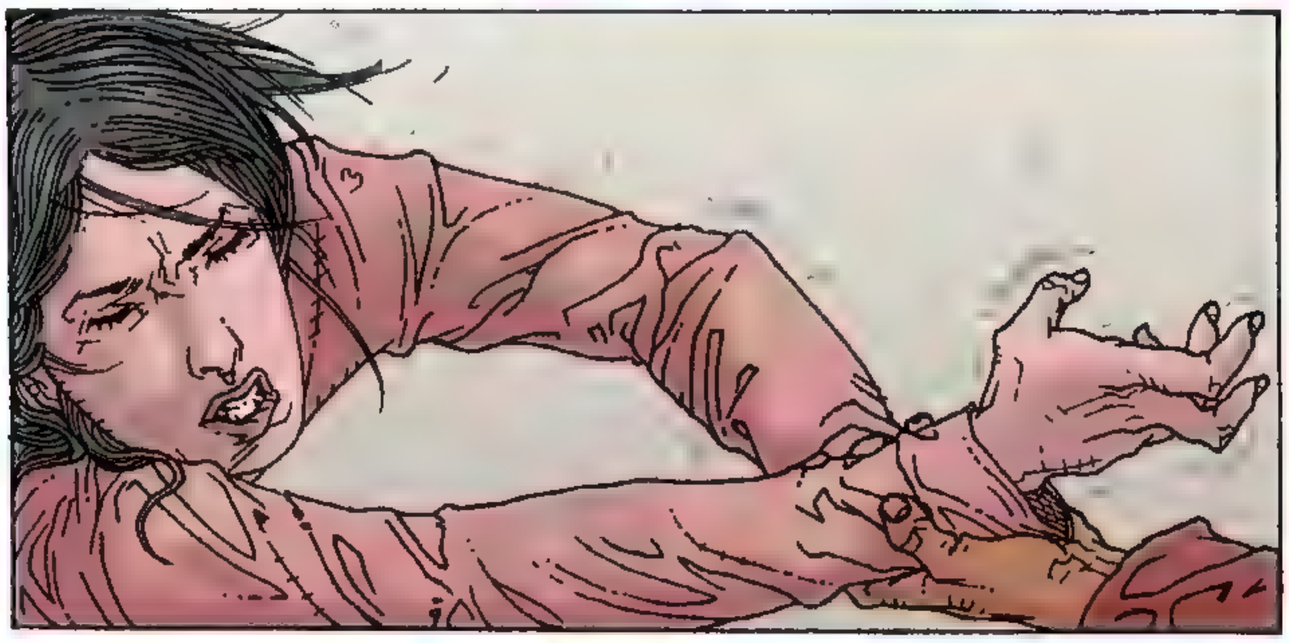
BRMMM
AAAH! OH PLEASE!

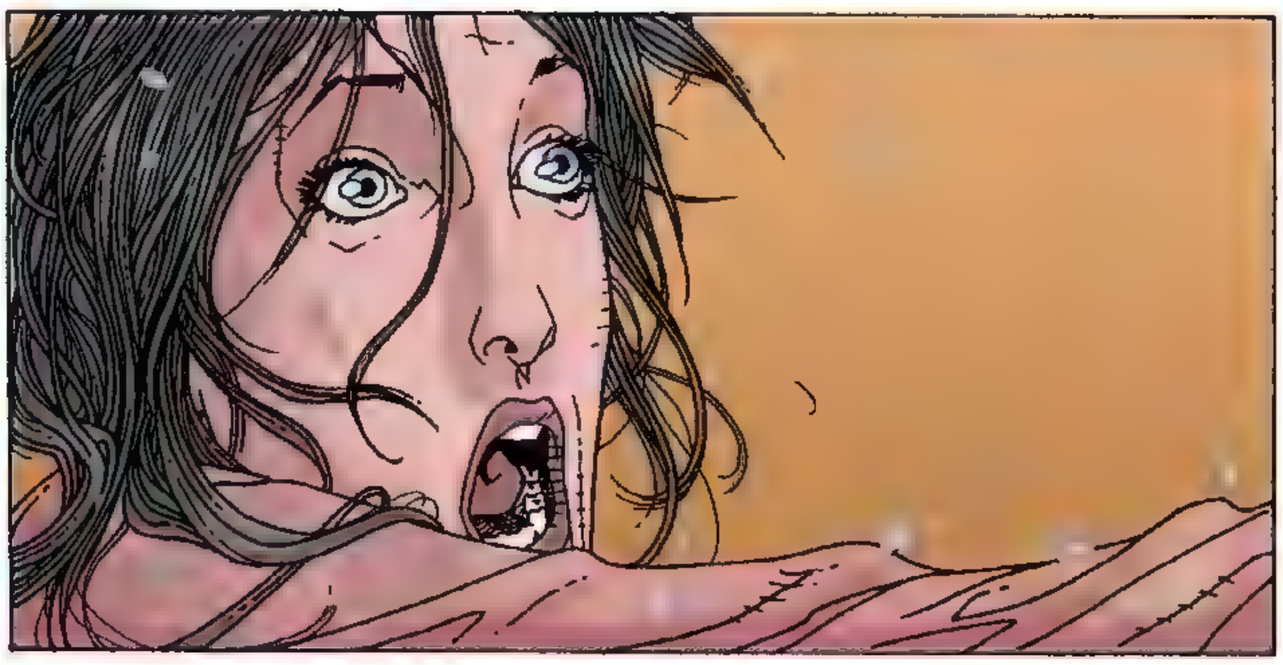

SRRASH

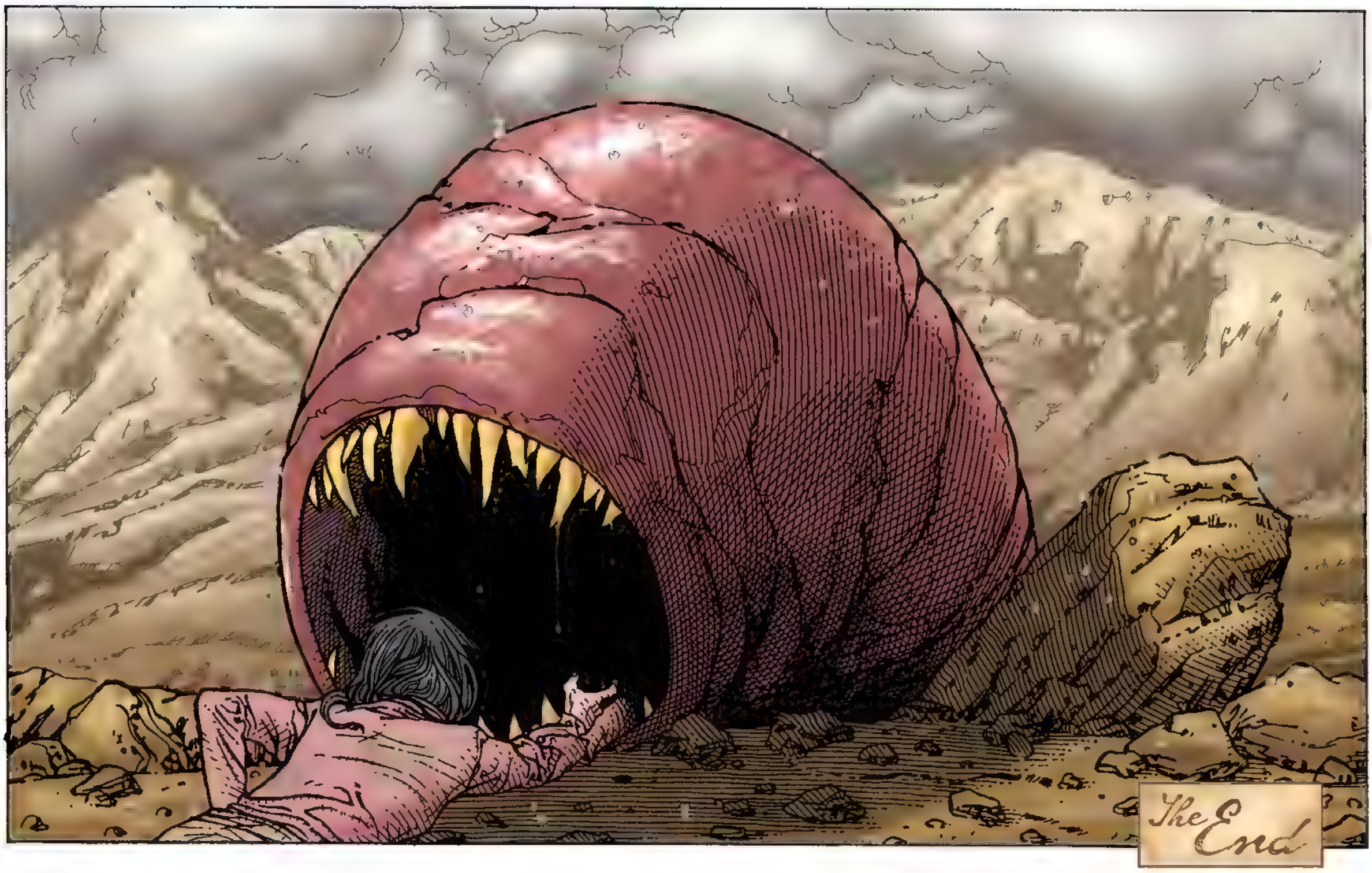
KRAK
SKREEE
DOCTOR LAMPTON! DOCTOR...


TSAKHI? IS THAT YOU, TSAKHI?
MRS. LAMPTON... PLEASE... YOU MUST...
AKK--








The End

WINTER HAD ARRIVED IN BURDEN HILL, THE NUMBING COLD SLOWING LIFE DOWN AND BRINGING A WELCOME PEACE AND QUIET TO THE RECENTLY TROUBLED NEIGHBORHOOD.

PUGS!!
HEY, PUGS!

FOR A TIME, AT LEAST.

PUGS, YOU GOTTA COME SEE THIS!

WHITEY?! ARE YOU CRAZY, BUGGIN' ME THIS EARLY--

OH, QUIT CRABBIN' AND COME ON, WILL YA?

REX! SOMETHING'S UP AT ACE'S!

NOW WHAT?

DON'T ASK ME. I'M STILL ASLEEP.

A DOG AND HIS BOY -by EVAN DORKIN, SARAH DYER AND JILL THOMPSON 2006

Hey, Ace. What Gives?

Shhh. Come here and take a look.

CRIPES...

What the hell IS that--?

It'S A *human!* A *boy* human!

What the hell'S He doing in *there*?

LOOKS like he'S SLEEPING.

Oh, HAR haR, Mr. FUNNY Cat.

he smells weird. kind of doggy-like.

Well, *duh*, Whitey, he's in a doghouse.

I just smell blood. Human blood.

Looks like he's been in a fight.

Yeah, and lost. Big time.

Ahem! Excuse me?

HCL

SORRY, But I don't appreciate people saying stuff about me like I'm not even here.

Great dog in Heaven...

It talks.

Of course I talk. So what?

Well... don't you think it's strange, I mean, your talking to us?

Lots of stuff talks to me. Rivers, birds, trees.

My people say everything speaks, but not everyone listens.

Your people?

You mean witches, *right?*

I'm on to you, *Witch boy!*

Pugsley!

I say we call the wise dog to check this witch out--

No, *Wait!* Don't call anyone, *please!*

The only humans we ever heard speakin' in animal tongues before was *witches!*

Are you *crazy?* I'm not a witch!

Oh, yeah, *right,* like a witch would tell the truth!

You gotta understand...

I ran away from home...

And I'd rather die than go back there.

Look, I'm sorry if I messed up your house. I needed to get out of the cold.

Just let me rest here a while. Please.

Well...

I know I wouldn't want anyone sending me back to MY old home.

Whoa, Ace, you ain't sayin'--

we've taken in strays before. He can stay with us until he's better--

AW HELL NO! you can count me out!

'cause I'm tellin' you, no good will come of this!

I can smell it like a TWO-DAY-OLD--

TEENAGE COUPLE MAULED IN WOOD SAVAGE ATTACK

HA HA HA HA

AS SOON AS it WAS DARK they WENT ABOUT GROOMING AND FEEDING the STRANGE BOY.

the ORPHAN KNEW of SEVERAL SLEEPING PLACES that OFFERED FREE CLOTHES.

He also knew WHERE those without OWNERS COULD FIND SOMETHING to eat.

Afterwards, Ace and the Boy stayed up the rest of that night, speaking in low tones about their lives and life itself.

ACE

the Boy told the story of his childhood and family, most of it unpleasant and cruel.

Life on the road wasn't much easier. He'd met all sorts, some worse than others.

then there was the girl in Des Moines.

She said she was a tattoo artist.

She was interested in his skin.

the next thing he remembered was waking up miles away in the woods, sick as a dog, a fresh tattoo on his chest as strange as the girl who had given it to him.

the Boy was more eager to tell the stories behind his other tattoos, of raven and eagle and other figures from the legends of his tribe.

Ace, in turn, told the Boy about the great dog in his endless fields.

And the Black Dog, shepherdess of the dead, who fetches the souls of the departed.

By the time sleep overtook them, both Ace and the boy felt as if they had discovered a long-lost brother.

the weeks that followed were the happiest either of them had ever known.

When the sun ruled the sky, the boy hid, and slept, and recovered his strength, shuttled between doghouses, garages, and sheds.

And when the moon took its place amongst the night stars, he roamed free with his newfound friends.

Although Pugsley never quite got over his suspicions, he had to admit that Myrna's pup would have died if it had not been for the boy.

No one ever said it aloud, but they all knew it. He had become one of them.

But then, almost overnight, a change came over the boy.

His old nightmares returned, black and red visions of the girl and the woods and faceless men chasing him for something he didn't do.

He grew moodier and more restless with each passing night, and increasingly paranoid that his nightmares were somehow becoming reality.

Some nights he refused to leave the yard, while on others he'd go off alone, coming back dirty and dishevled and unwilling to speak about where he had been.

One night, he didn't come back at all.

--Well, maybe he just moved on?

Yeah, and maybe he's *hurt!* You know how strange he's been acting--

PSSSST!

PSSt! HEY! GUYS! I SEE HIM!

HUH? WHAT'S HE DOING IN *HOBSON'S* YARD?

HOW SHOULD I KNOW? COME ON!

UGH... WHAT'S THAT *SMELL?*

the next NiGht...

AAW

HRRARRAAAAA

told you that kid was freaky. we shoulda done this the *minute* we saw him.

Shut it, pugs.

Hey, guys. what's all the shouting about?

um, it's a summon--

we're calling for a friend of ours to visit us. we have to howl loud enough so he'll hear because we never know where he is or how far away.

oh. I see.

What?

I was just trying to h-h- HRRk--

-aHURRRk- coff coff--

-MmmWURRRGh--!

Oh GOD... W-What's HAPPENING to Me?

Just HOLD ON. help is on the way--

Leave me ALONE...

Please...

I don't fuh-Feel so G-GOOD.

ACE! Get AWAY FROM HIM!

DAMN it, PUGS! Can't you see he's SICK?

NNRRAARGH!

oh, GOD...

help me... H-Help--

Y-You hear all that WOOD SNAPPIN'?

He's busting up your house!

...that ISN't WOOD.

GREAT DOG, help US...

RRRAAAOOO

the BOY IS ASLEEP, LOST IN RED dREAMS. there IS ONLY ME.

NO!

YES!

I'm letting you live, Because you've been GOOD to us.

CROSS MY Path AGAIN and I WILL eat you, BONES AND all.

Ace! NO! there's NothinG YOU CAN DO!

they KNEW it WAS hopeLESS to tRY AND STOP Ace.

AFTER all, DOGS ARE NothinG IF not LOYAL.

the creature had gotten far ahead of them, spurred on by a hideous supernatural strength and need.

But even a human could follow the obvious trail.

did you hear that? sounded like a GUNshot!

Monstrous paw prints in the snow, the air heavy with the scent of wolf and urine, and finally...

...death.

Ace, we have to get out of here.

We can't save that man... we can't save anyone--

ACE!

C'MON!

LITTLE BASTARD!

WHAT did I tell YOU? WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

SOMEBODY do SOMETHING! He's KILLING him! He's killing Hi--

BLAM

ACE!

POW!

Ace...

--COff COff--
ACe...?

RRRF!

WRRRUff
Raff!

W-What
HAPPENED? You're
BLeeDinG...

WURRf--?

oh ACe...

I can't even
understand you
no MORe...

I...

can't...

yo! over here!

yeah, it's him all right.

poor bastard.

don't feel too sorry for him. you saw what he did to danny.

what about the husky? he looks pretty bad.

you wanna waste a silver bullet on some mutt, you go right ahead.

yeah. you got a point there.

sorry, boy.

don't leave me...

Please...

...Don't leave Me...

I'm not dying...

I'm...

...not...

What your friend did was very brave.

Yeah.

If only I could have gotten there sooner...

Perhaps I would have been able to do more for them.

As it is I'm only an apprentice, not a wise dog. My healing skills are not very far along.

Please... you did so much for us.

We'll always be grateful to you.

that winter was the harshest anyone could remember on the Hill.

No one left home without their owners.

Nobody spoke about the boy who could talk.

And nothing howled save for the wind.

THE END

Mike Mignola, Hellboy, and a roster of great creators and characters explore the dark corners of the horror genre in these stories of witchcraft, monsters, and the risen dead.

Originally published in four award-winning anthologies, these stories include the debut of Evan Dorkin and Jill Thompson's *Beasts of Burden* series and standalone tales by Kelley Jones, Kurt Busiek, and many other stellar horror creators.

In addition to the comics, Gary Gianni (*Hellboy: Into the Silent Sea*) illustrates prose stories by legendary authors such as Robert E. Howard (*Conan*) and William Hope Hodgson (*The House on the Borderland*). These chilling tales are collected for the first time in paperback!

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